EVERY INCH A KING

Josephine Caroline Sawyer

50

EVERY INCH A KING

The Romance of Henry of Monmouth, Sometime Prince of Wales

By

Josephine Caroline Sawyer

New York
Dodd, Mead & Company
1901

Copyright, 1901,
By Dodd, Mead and Company.

TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER

WITHOUT WHOSE CONSTANT SYMPATHY, ENCOURAGEMENT AND KINDLY CRITICISM, THIS BOOK COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN WRITTEN.

2138153

NOTE

THIS book was written with the single purpose of proving that the character of Henry V., while Prince of Wales, has been greatly misjudged.

It should, therefore, be clearly understood that there is most excellent historical authority for every important event in the Prince's life and for every trait of his character which is here portrayed. The romance alone is partly imaginary, but even this has a firm foundation in fact, and if the details of it may not be found upon the written page of any chronicler, neither will the most careful student find evidence that they are untrue.

WATERTOWN, NEW YORK,
4 February, 1901.

EVERY INCH A KING

CHAPTER I.

"One thought of thee puts all the pomp to flight;
Priests, tapers, temples, swim before my sight."

POPE.

IT was the springtime, and France was arrayed in all her glory. The buds were swelling upon the noble trees, the early flowers were peeping from the grass, and the birds were singing their sweetest songs to aid their wooing. Love was the burden of their melody, and as their notes rang out joyously in the early dawn, a young monk standing in the window of a stately castle on the coast of Normandy felt his heart throb in answer to their plea. Was not the whole world singing the same glad song? And why must he stifle it upon his lips and crush the passion which turned his blood to fire?

He glanced about the great, luxurious chamber,—so worthy of a wealthy nobleman. What mad freak was it that had impelled him to sacrifice his birthright; to abandon the gay court life which had once been the goal of his ambition; and to inform the abbot that he would give all his wealth to Mother Church and would return to the monastery in which he had been educated, there to end his days in holy

peace? Perchance it was weariness of the artificial life at Paris which impelled him to this step. Possibly the long years during which the abbot had been both father and mother to the lonely orphan, had bred in him a love for the religious life. Most probable of all, his fancied passion for a beautiful lady of high rank, and his despair upon her marriage to another nobleman, had driven him to seek a refuge from the world. Perhaps the abbot had doubted the sincerity of his resolution and had suspected that a brief delay would cause his unstable mind to change once more;—certain it is, that he pressed the matter vigorously, and within a week the deeds, conveying the rich property to the Church, were signed and sealed.

The young monk, thinking upon these things, bit his lips, a curse within his heart. Oh, why had he given way to a brief impulse? How could he have forgotten that such a step would seal his fate for life? And as the memories of that evening, but one short month ago, came crowding to his mind, he paced the chamber restlessly, angry mutterings upon his lips.

On the very night before he had donned the cowl, the Queen and her court passed near, and he had spent the last hours of freedom in entertaining royally his sovereign lady. Among those attending upon Queen Isabella, the consort of Charles VI., was a maiden, a child in years, but so beautiful, so bewitching in her sweet innocence, that the young

nobleman found surging in his heart a passionate love which bewildered him. With the long-practiced skill of a courtier he tried to win a blush and a smile from the little maid, but her unconsciousness and ignorance of coquetry defeated him. Spurred on to fresh endeavors, he soon found that the game was turning from jest to earnest; and when the Queen and her court rode onward the next morn, he had laid his heart at her childish feet, and received as his only response a wondering, wide-eyed smile and a deep courtesy.

Baffled, enraged alike at his failure to make her understand, and at the fate which awaited him, the young nobleman laid aside his rich garments, and with submissive face, but a heart filled with bitter hate, he presented himself before the abbot, and without passing through the usual novitiate, he became a monk.

The abbot noticed his restless melancholy, and advised some active labor; so, having already gained a knowledge of the art of illuminating, he commenced to write the Gospel of St. John;—but a beautiful, childish face swam ever before his eyes; and, secreting a piece of heavy vellum, he began slowly to paint those dear features which were stamped upon his brain. With exquisite daintiness, and the tender touch of a lover, he worked diligently, and soon the little miniature, as the work of illumination was called, lay completed in his bosom, and he returned to the task which had been set him; but ever and

anon he would lay aside the Holy Gospel and cover many sheets of vellum with the outlines of that same fair face, nor could he force his hand to destroy the sketches.

Thus he nourished and kept alive his passion until the Queen returned from her journey and tarried for a day at a neighboring town. Forgotten in a moment were duty and honor and even safety; for the young monk, stealing from the monastery, hurried to the near-by castle, entered, by a secret passage, his old chamber, left still untouched, and robed himself in his most gorgeous doublet and hose, with sword and spurs of gold, and a rich riding cloak. Then managing to obtain one of his noblest horses, he rode away to the town, where the Queen received him with much graciousness, never dreaming that he had become a monk. There he saw also the little maiden, and she had not forgotten him; but she did not leave the Queen's side, and he dared not show her the picture which he had intended to give her, but was forced to ride away at last, unsatisfied, and still more discontented.

Slowly, in deep thought, he had sought his chamber and put aside his rich apparel, leaving the garments in confusion on the floor. Reluctantly he had folded the rough cloak of his order about his shoulders; and now he stood by the window, gazing lovingly toward the town which sheltered his beloved, and, heedless of advancing day and of his own danger, abandoned himself to a lover's passionate dream.

Long he stood there, desperately striving to find some path to happiness, and the sun's rays had gilded the east with fiery radiance, when, on a sudden, the sound of many feet approaching startled the young man from his revery. He turned, with a sharp cry of terror; for, as his door swung wide, he beheld the abbot standing upon the threshold, while behind him clustered a group of monks.

One glance from the culprit's guilty face to the raiment strewn about the apartment and the gleaming sword near by, convicted him; and the abbot advanced with a stern countenance. "How didst thou dare!" he cried in a voice of thunder. "Dost realize the sin thou hast committed? Thou hast wronged both God and man! Thou hast broken thy solemn vows and taken again to thyself the state which thou hadst sacrificed to the Most High! Shame upon thee, thou who hast robbed the Church of thine own gift to her!"

The sinful monk sank upon his knees. "Have mercy upon me," he pleaded in quivering tones. The abbot's hard face set in grim triumph. During the long years in which the haughty young noble had been under his charge he had never dared to deal with him sternly; but now the broad lands were the possession of the monastery and this proud spirit must humbly yield to him. Ah, he would make him suffer! He would show the monks under his control that even the highest among them should not escape punishment. "Mercy"? he answered fiercely, "for

what mercy canst thou hope, thou sinful man? Know that thy guilt is plain;—look at these, and then deny if thou darest, that thou hast loved a mortal maiden, hast robbed God even of thy heart and given it to her! And thou hast even now been with her!" he exclaimed, waving before the culprit's face the tell-tale sketches found in his cell.

With a cry, the young man sprang to his feet and shrank back against the tapestry. It was discovered then—his sinful love. He must yield himself, give up forever all thought of this sweet maiden, surrender the picture in his bosom to be destroyed, and submit to the terrible punishment which awaited him. His face blanched at the thought. Well he remembered, in his boyhood, a monk who had dared to love and the fate that befell him. Must he submit and humble his proud spirit to such disgrace? No, by Heaven! Why not fly, escape to England, seek refuge at the court, and some day return, a mighty English lord, to win his bride? His vows? He had already broken them. He had already sinned most deeply. What matter one more naughty deed? And even as the abbot stepped toward him, crying,—"Yield thyself, as thou art a true monk!" his trembling hand found the secret spring, the panel opened, and with one bound he had dashed it shut behind him and rammed home a trusty bolt; and ere the astounded abbot could utter a cry, his prisoner was far down the secret passage, and in another moment had leapt upon the back of his horse, secreted

near the opening, and was riding furiously in the direction of that harbor of refuge—Calais.

For many hours he rode, exhausted and fasting, not daring to stop for food or rest; and as he neared his destination his tired horse took fright at some vague shape, and dashing forward, shook off the weary man's control. In a moment they reached the open drawbridge to the citadel, but the cry of "Halt!" sounded faintly in the young monk's ears, and he could only tighten his hold upon the saddle. Then a swift arrow smote him in the breast, and he was whirled along through space to fall senseless when the hoof-beats ceased.

When at last he became conscious, and opened his eyes, it was the twilight hour, and he found himself lying upon a couch covered with furs in a large chamber apparently belonging to a man of rank. It was rudely furnished, yet rushes were upon the floor, rich tapestries covered the cold stone walls, and upon a chest near by lay several articles of clothing of the finest texture, and above them hung suspended a handsome sword. As the young monk slowly became conscious of these details, a low, sweet voice fell upon his ears, asking in the English language, which he understood, "Art thyself again, good brother? 'Tis many hours since thou didst close thine eyes."

He turned upon his pillow, and saw a figure bending over him—tall, slender and perfectly developed, clad in rich though sombre garments, with grace in

every line of the supple body, and the pride of birth in the carriage of the head; but what chiefly fascinated the impressionable young monk and caused him to gaze as if entranced, was the delicate face, every line cut with exquisite clearness, having a broad forehead and a slender though by no means a weak chin and jaw, a nose a trifle too long for perfect symmetry, but straight and evenly shaped, a firm, sweet mouth, and glorious, deep brown eyes filled with tender pity. But its greatest beauty lay in the smile upon those lips—a smile so brilliant yet so gentle, that the suffering monk smiled faintly in reply, and feebly stretched out his hand as if seeking help and comfort from this stranger.

The Englishman knelt before him and took the trembling hand in his strong, gentle grasp. "Art suffering, brother?" he asked. The monk nodded feebly, and then asked in broken English where he was. "This is Calais," answered the other quickly. "Et tu?" "An English officer in charge of the garrison."

The Frenchman's eyes were still fixed upon the face beside him. He lay silent for a moment gazing upon it; then a sudden memory of why he was here made him start violently and cry out with mingled pain and dread. The Englishman sprang up and crossed the room, returning with some wine. "Drink," he commanded, raising the monk by placing an arm beneath his shoulders, while he held the goblet to his lips; then, in answer to the mute appeal

in the terror-stricken eyes, he added gently, "Thou art safe with me, good brother." The monk sighed and turned his head away; then suddenly began to fumble beneath his gown, an alarmed expression crossing his face. The Englishman, watching him closely, went to the chest and took from it a piece of heavy vellum. "When thy wound was dressed," he explained, "I found this in thy breast. No eyes but mine have seen it, brother." The other seized it feverishly and pressed it to his lips, moaning in French, "Oh, my love, my love, am I never to see thy dear face again?" Then with a sudden remembrance of his sin, he shrank back among his cushions and threw his arms across his eyes as if to conceal his face.

The Englishman knelt once more beside him and said gently, "Brother, if thou hast sinned, confess, and ask forgiveness ere it is too late. Shall I send thee a priest?"

"Non, non!" cried the monk in fierce terror, then humbly pleaded to be allowed to confess to him.

"I am not a priest," answered the officer, drawing back, but the monk answered brokenly that he had sinned past earthly forgiveness; that God alone might grant him pardon, and that his benefactor's prayers would greatly comfort him.

So, through the long watches of the night, the Englishman sat beside the repentant monk, listening to the story of his life, told feebly, with long pauses between the sentences, and in a mixture of broken

English and much French. Tenderly the young officer bathed his wounds, gave him wine and food, often held him in his arms that the poor, wearied body might be relieved, and, greatest comfort of all, soothed his mental anguish with tender words and earnest prayers to the Great Pardoner.

When morning dawned the monk knew that his hour of life was short. Drawing from beneath his pillow the fatal picture, he placed it in the Englishman's hand, and with a last effort gathered strength to utter brokenly the gratitude which filled his heart. Looking into those clear eyes filled with pitying tears, he begged him to keep the miniature in remembrance of his wretched story and as a warning against unholy love. Then, a blessing upon his lips, his voice grew faint, he gasped with pain, and his head fell back against the officer's breast.

With a quiet reverence the young Englishman laid the form among the cushions and stood for a moment gazing upon the monk's face, troubled no longer, but very calm in death. Then thrusting the picture into his bosom he softly passed from the chamber and gently closed the door.

CHAPTER II.

"I do love
My country's good with a respect more tender,
More holy and profound than mine own life."
CORIOLANUS.

THE rich verdure of the English country, the delightful coolness of the air after a long period of heat, and the monarch's consequent increase of health—these were the chief causes which brought Henry Bolingbroke to the forest of Windsor in order that on this glorious summer day he might enjoy the pleasures of the chase.

Only twelve years had passed since Henry, then the handsome, gallant Duke of Hereford, had landed in England to demand his estates of Lancaster, wrongfully kept from him since his father's death by his cousin, Richard the Second. The people had risen suddenly in their might, and, led by the greatest nobles of the land, forced Richard to resign, and placed the crown upon Henry's head. Then Parliament, boldly exercising its growing power, had passed by the line of Mortimer, descended from the Duke of Clarence's daughter, whose representative, Edmund, Earl of March, was at that time only eight years of age, and had declared Bolingbroke and his heirs to be the rightful rulers over England. Richard, the former king, soon died mysteriously; the

Earl of March was a prisoner in Windsor Castle; and after crushing numberless rebellions, Henry the Fourth at last could rule in peace.

But those twelve years of almost constant warfare had left their fatal mark upon the King. He had been a strong—a powerful ruler, the conqueror of his enemies, the leader of his people; and with Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, as his chancellor, he had reigned like a king indeed. But now, broken in health, old, while yet young in years, and feeling the love and support of his faithful people slipping from him day by day, Bolingbroke had been compelled to surrender the actual government into the hands of his eldest son.

In the fall of 1410, Thomas of Clarence, the King's second son, had married Margaret Holland, widow of the Earl of Somerset, over whose will he had quarrelled with the deceased nobleman's brothers, Thomas Beaufort, known to history as the Duke of Exeter, and Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester. These two powerful men, half-brothers of the King, were the leaders of a strong party in opposition to Archbishop Arundel; and among their numbers were the Earl of Suffolk, the Baron Scrope, and the Earl of Arundel, nephew of the archbishop. To this party the Prince of Wales had allied himself; and upon the rapid increase of the King's illness, Parliament, to whose will Henry had ever bowed. and upon whose pleasure depended his retention of the throne, had shown such marked displeasure at

Arundel's policy that the haughty churchman had been compelled to resign the chancellorship. The government was thereupon vested in a strong council with Thomas Beaufort as chancellor, the Bishop of Winchester as the leading spirit, and the Prince of Wales as actual ruler of the realm.

Such a situation filled the King's heart with great bitterness, and as he observed the increasing popularity of the Prince, an intense, unreasoning jealousy of his son laid hold upon him, and he did not fail, upon the slightest return of health, to make every effort to regain his power.

Thus it happened that upon this glorious July day, when the chief members of the council who had accompanied Henry upon his morning hunt, were preparing to start for London, there to confer with the Prince upon important matters, the King prevented their departure.

"Our council will meet to-day at Windsor," he informed them, adding, with the utmost carelessness, "I will send a messenger to notify the Prince."

They gazed at him in amazement and consternation. Weeks had passed since the King had last joined them in the council. Their meeting to-day was a most momentous one, and Prince Henry could not reach them for many hours, if, indeed, he came at all. What was to be done? Nothing, it seemed. They had too well learned the peevish temper of the sick King to think of opposing his will, and reluctantly they resigned themselves to fate, while

Bolingbroke rode home, an expression of vindictive triumph upon his pale, thin face.

The same instinctive desire to postpone the final victory, which makes a cat delight in its cruel play with a captured mouse, caused the King to delay, upon one pretext or another, the assembling of the council. They were fatigued by their hunt and must first dine at leisure; then the gracious Queen and her noble ladies were in the garden, and it would seem ungallant not to give them greeting. So the time passed, and Henry, feeling confident that his son would prefer the pleasures of London to the labors of Windsor, at length summoned the lords to join him within the castle.

A gloomy and embarrassed circle gathered there, restless, uncertain what to say or do. The King had been absent for so long that his council had almost forgotten his existence. He was still inclined to follow Arundel's advice, and when he appeared at all, he never failed to oppose Bishop Winchester's policy. And to-day the consummation of a year's labor was at last to be reached, a most important decision made, and the final diplomatic triumph achieved—and behold! the King had grasped the reins of power once more, the Prince was absent, and the hour for action speeding past! How much did Henry know of their plans? Would he oppose them, and would they dare to act against his will? Should they risk a fatal opposition by betraying their project, or should they take the no

less dangerous course of delaying their decision, and perhaps losing forever the chance for a brilliant stroke of policy?

The King gazed upon them with a bitter smile. "We understand, my lords," he said, "that ye have matters of grave importance to discuss with us. We are prepared to listen to them now."

Bishop Winchester glanced doubtfully at his royal brother. He was a strong man and a fearless, confident in his own powers and ready in argument, yet the task of persuading the King to consent to their desires seemed too difficult for him. Hesitatingly he answered that the defences of the Cinque Ports must be strengthened—could his Majesty suggest some means?

The King suggested coldly that this was not the matter to which he had referred.

Winchester flushed, and Thomas Beaufort, comprehending that the bishop desired to conceal their true purpose, hurriedly brought up the old subject of ransoming the captive Prince James of Scotland.

"Hath our brother of Scotland sent ye fresh proposals?" inquired the King sharply. The chancellor, in confusion, answered "no," upon which Henry said,—"Brother Thomas, search thy mind and mayhap thou shalt discover other and more important matters which require discussion." He looked from one Beaufort to the other, but neither of them cared to meet his eyes. The Earl of Suffolk suggested despairingly that "'Twas rumored that Owen Glen-

dower was dead, and peace with Wales might be made at last." The King gave a short, scornful laugh. "That rumor reached our ears two years ago, but the magician doth still live to thwart our purposes." Then rising to his feet, Henry gazed sternly upon the dismayed council. "My lords," he said, with haughty dignity, "ye do forget of late who is your king. Ye seek to keep from me the knowledge of weighty matters affecting the welfare of my realm. This must not be, my lords—*this must not be,*" and he rapped sharply upon the table with his fist while his cheeks flushed with anger. "Do ye think I will permit such disrespect?" he thundered. "It is my mad-brained son doth plan such insults. I' faith, methinks that he giveth ye magic potions, else ye would never have such love for him. He rules ye by a glance, and ye obey his slightest word and sign. What! will ye make him king in very fact? In mine illness will ye rob me of the crown? Oh, shame upon you, ye ungrateful men, and double shame on him who seeks my place,—who snatches from me the favor of my people and seizes upon every royal honor!"

The nobles had sprung to their feet, and more than one brow grew dark with rage. Winchester cried hoarsely, "Sire, thou wrongest the Prince in word and thought,—he is thy loyal son and we thy faithful subjects."

"Loyal! Faithful!" cried the King bitterly, "ay, ye are as faithful as was Northumberland, and he—"

The words died on his lips and an expression of dismay and chagrin came to his face. The nobles turned as one man and a cry of relief and joy escaped from the bishop.

Standing in the doorway, booted and spurred, with whip in hand, his handsome head thrown back, his brown eyes alight with pleasure and excitement, was the Prince of Wales—a goodly picture of young manhood, even in his travel-stained and dusty garments. As he came forward and bowed low before his royal father, the King's eyes softened a moment. "'Tis long since I have seen thee, Harry," he said.

"It is, my liege," answered the Prince quickly, "and 'tis still longer since thou wert in council. I thank God that thou art in better health."

Bolingbroke smiled a little grimly, then took his seat and motioned to the others to do likewise. When all were in their places, he turned to the Prince, who sat at his right hand, and watching him closely, said, with apparent carelessness,—"We have awaited thy arrival, Harry, before discussing our most important measures, and we are now prepared to listen to thee."

A slight expression of surprise came to the Prince's face, and he glanced inquiringly at Winchester. The bishop shook his head warningly, and placed his finger upon his lips. Harry understood, but the flush which came to his cheeks, and the angry light which shone in his eyes, drove the color from the churchman's face. "By Heaven," he mut-

tered underneath his breath, "he is determined that the King shall know!"

"My gracious lord and father," spoke the Prince, "hast thou been advised concerning the proposed alliance with Duke John?"

The King started slightly,—this, then, was the secret they had guarded with such care. He answered coldly,—"An alliance with Burgundy? Why, this is news indeed. No man hath told me of it."

The Prince's flush deepened as if he felt rebuked, but he responded simply,—

"I thought thou knewest it, although thou wert too ill to receive the ambassadors. Wilt please thee to listen to our purposes?"

"Say on, Prince Harry."

Bishop Beaufort and the treasurer, Lord Scrope, leaned forward eagerly as if to hear each word, while the Earl of Arundel, veiling his vital interest under an assumed calm, yet watched the King with quick, expectant eyes.

The Prince hesitated as if to frame his words, then, facing his father, calmly spoke:

"My liege, thou knowest well the grave, uncertain state which, day by day, further envelops France. To our mind, this once noble kingdom is, even now, so torn with civil strife, that it can ne'er again become united and in peace. It seemeth probable that the great power of Burgundy will, ere many moons, conquer this warring land and hold her subject.

Therefore, it is fit, both that our noble country, loving peace, shall help the inevitable end to quick conclusion; and furthermore, that we retain our friendship with the conqueror. Burgundy hath sent to us for aid, and it appeareth the part of wisdom to respond swiftly and favorably,—while he needeth us. What dost thou say to it, my noble lord?"

"Thou wert ever a most excellent reasoner, Prince," was the King's reply.

The chancellor rose: "Nay, but, my lord, at least thou wilt give us thy advice. We place before thee such a policy as will make us the greatest nation upon earth. Why, think, my lord, consider the great power of England's arm, and yet, 'tis still no secret that we've long ere this had cause to fear the boldness of that kingdom which, even now, threatens the state of France. The duke hath sent ambassadors to plead with us, and if we scorn them, it may be our ruin; yet, go we two together, hand in hand, England and Burgundy against the world, allies, and equal sharers of the lands which for so many years false France has holden against us to our shame,—what future would be too great or difficult for us?"

"A brilliant dream, Thomas, by my faith," answered the King coldly. "Yet why wouldst have us give up half our rights, when we should gain them all?"

"How wouldst thou have us win them, good my lord?"

The King laughed in scorn. "Methinks thou art half-witted, chancellor. Give France our aid against bold Burgundy, and ask the same fair lands as our reward."

"To which of the several parties that divide the wretched country shall we offer aid, most royal father?"

The King was silenced for a space, and Winchester exchanged a triumphant smile with the Earl of Suffolk. But, presently, the sovereign asked: "Why should we interfere at all, my lords? Methinks we shall gain most by looking on in silence."

"And let the Duke John conquer France in peace? Where, then, are our fair lands, my gracious liege?"

The King frowned at his son and tapped the table impatiently. "I would my lord archbishop were in presence here," he muttered, but low as were his words they escaped not the quick ear of Henry Beaufort, the doughty bishop of Winchester.

"Thou forgettest, sire," he cried hotly, "that Arundel is no longer a member of this council, nor do I comprehend why *he* should give advice upon such weighty matters of policy."

"We know full well, lord bishop," replied the King, "how deeply thou and our brother chancellor do hate this same archbishop Arundel. 'Tis not needful that ye show your hatred here."

"Nor is it needful," came the chancellor's sullen voice, "that since we rule in name, still he should verily rule in fact."

"Nay, my lord, my lord," cried the Prince hastily, half rising from his seat, "I prithee, peace. My liege," he continued, turning to the King, "we were discussing our French matters. Duke John, we learn, being about to advance, even to Paris itself, with a large force, it seemeth the part of wisdom to conclude whatever treaty is proposed, with haste, that at this critical time our friendship may be so much more welcome to proud Burgundy. Therefore, I do beseech thee, let us make decision with all speed. Will it please your Highness to give this matter your approval?"

"Not yet, Prince Harry," and the King smiled in spite of his annoyance, at his son's persistence. "Even without the counsel of Arundel, we will yet presume to question somewhat farther ere we do give consent." Then, addressing the noblemen, he said impressively: "The arguments ye use are strong, yet ye have not remedied a chief great weakness. Ye know full well how ofttimes treacherous are the rulers of great countries. Ye would offer help to Burgundy. He'll sure accept it. He pledges himself to you to share his conquests. Now, after that we've helped him with our arms, how, save by cruel war, shall we compel the fulfilment of his pledge? Ha! What say ye, lords? Can ye answer this?"

The nobles hesitated, and each in turn, as the King sought their eyes, looked to Beaufort for answer. But the bishop, in some confusion, could only

enlarge upon England's mighty strength and Burgundy's sure, honorable gratitude.

It was a moment of triumph for the King, and his delight showed plainly in his voice as he said to his son: "What, Harry, art thou still silent? Hast no more arguments that will convince us of the deep wisdom of thy purposes? Poor boy, thou art still young, and must not yet hope to lead nations by thy rash desires for foreign conquest and bold alliances."

The Prince flushed, but answered very calmly, "I am not silenced yet, my gracious lord, but would propose one other measure ere we decide this matter. Will 't please thee hear me?"

"Speak," muttered the King, dismayed by the certainty in his son's tone.

Prince Harry gazed into the circle of eager faces filled with anxiety, and, by his quiet smile, restored entire confidence to them all. Then, deliberately, yet with the reverence he always showed his father, he answered:

"Your Highness asketh what manner of control we shall have over Burgundy when the fighting ends. Thou art right, my liege, this is a vital point; and without some more certain hold than the duke's pledge, we're like to have no honors but the war. Therefore, my lord, let Burgundy, with speed, send us, as he has proposed, his daughter; and when she is wed unto the Prince of Wales—the future King—methinks her father will not then decline to give to England all that she may ask."

An instant's silence followed Harry's words, and then the nobles found relief from their doubts and expression of their satisfaction in a low cheer.

The Prince's constant opposition to the different marriages proposed for him had caused the council to disregard and even to forget this suggestion of the duke's ambassadors. They were, therefore, all the more delighted when Harry, of his own volition, declared his willingness to accede to it. The King, whose constant opposition to the Prince's policy was caused not by conviction, but by an unreasonable jealousy of his gallant son, knew himself defeated, yet he would not yield.

"So, Prince," he said, "it was for this that thou hast persistently refused the marriages that were our wish. How often have we sought alliances, honorable and full of possibilities, and thou hast coolly answered,—'I will not wed till I can choose my bride to please myself.' This is thy choice—this the result of all our labor. Thou wouldst place a princess of the House of Burgundy upon our throne. Ay, I know the reason for it,—thou hast heard that she hath beauty, grace, perchance, and smiles for all young gallants who will woo her rightly, and for her smile thou wouldst sacrifice thy countrymen in war! Well, have it as thou wilt. I'll not contend against such folly longer. Only, sir, remember, when thou hast won this woman, and lost all else, that hadst thou married Denmark's daughter, as we wished, or even her of France, the issue of the right-

ful king, poor Charles, the power of this, our country, might have been tenfold the greater."

"Nay, my lord," humbly replied the Prince, "it then appeared but little part of wisdom to become allied with either of these houses; and this present union is not my desire; yet I sacrifice myself most gladly for my country's 'vantage."

"Thou sacrificest thyself gladly? Dost thou indeed! Then prove thy willingness to serve our England, Harry, by thrusting off thy vile companions, curbing thy loose life, and living as the Prince of Wales should live. What sayest thou to this, ha!"

So cruel a thrust brought the vivid color to the Prince's cheeks, yet with an upraised hand and a quick glance he stayed the indignant mutterings among the nobles, and answered gently,—"At a more convenient time, I shall endeavor to win better opinions of your Highness than thou now holdest of me. Yet let me plead for haste in public matters, for the hour grows late. Have we convinced your Grace that it is wisdom to seek for an alliance with Duke John?"

Infuriated by the Prince's persistence, and his illness suddenly attacking him, the King lost his wonderful self-control and leapt to his feet, crying hotly: "Thou perverse, rebellious, unnatural son, headstrong and proud, ever seeking thine own advantage, wouldst even force me to give my consent to such a measure? Thou takest my honors from me and dost rule as if thou verily wert the king, not I. By

Heaven, can I but regain my strength, and rid me of this grievous wasting sickness, I'll strip thee of thy undeserved powers and show thee that the day of reckoning comes to such a one as thou when he least looks for 't. And then, thou traitor—"

Even as the nobles sprang to their feet in angry protest, and the Prince sought desperately to prevent an outbreak, the words died on the King's lips, his face grew very white, his hands beat the air wildly and he staggered back and fell heavily into the outstretched arms of his son.

Harry's voice broke the sudden silence: "Will no one aid me, lords? Bethink ye this is a heavy weight to bear alone." Then as each one moved quickly forward, he added swiftly, "Lord Scrope, thou mayst help me. We'll bear him to his chamber and will straight return. Await us here, my lords."

Freed from the restraint of the Prince's presence, the nobles gave way to their indignation, and denounced the King's conduct in no uncertain manner.

"'Tis an outrage upon us all," cried the hot-headed Earl of Arundel. "Never was there a more noble son than this same prince. Look how he has quieted our every protest; borne the King's calumny with meek humility, and never once has failed to show him all obedience and respect. And this is his reward! Zounds! Would the Prince but let me speak my mind upon this matter, I'd throw defiance in King Henry's teeth."

"That he'll not," said Henry Beaufort, smiling,

"but yestere'en I, even I, his uncle, ventured some slight remonstrance with my royal brother, and when the Prince heard I had taken his part, he sought me out and sternly told me he'd have none of it. I would all sons showed like obedience."

"But," spoke the Earl of Suffolk, "I vow I'm wearied of this same humility. Must we forever bow our necks before this king who is too ill even to know his mind? The Prince has ruled, in fact, these many months, and never has our England had a head more upright and more just. I' faith, my lords, 'tis time the Prince received the honors and the power, besides the labor."

"Lord Suffolk, this were treason," cried a voice; and Gascoigne, the lord chief justice, laid his hand upon the earl's arm. "Surely, my lord, thou wouldst not go so far? We all do love our gallant, wayward Prince—but to dethrone the King—"

"Saidst thou 'wayward'?" cried Arundel, hotly, and his hand went instantly to his sword-hilt, "my lord, thou must retract that word of thine."

The lord chief justice raised his hand in protest. "Nay, but, my lord, thou wilt be reasonable. Canst thou deny that the young Prince's friends are strangely chosen, for one of his condition?"

"What friends, my lord? Dost thou mean Lord Scrope, or is it to *me* that thou dost object?"

Sir William smiled a little. "Nay, Lord Thomas, thou knowest well whom I do mean. My lords," and the judge looked questioningly upon the others pres-

ent, "will ye not bear me out? Dost not the King say well when he reproves the Prince for these same loose companions, who are his intimates? Surely they are not fit associates for the throne's heir."

"Mayhap not," answered the chancellor, "yet hast thou ever known their counsel to make the Prince do wrong? Is he less earnest o'er affairs of state? Does he neglect his duties at Calais? Or is he now less wise than was his wont in shaping policies of government?"

"None of these things can I here charge him with," answered the chief justice, "yet I would willingly see him end all danger of such wrong."

"I cannot chide him for this slight fault," spoke up the bishop, "but methinks the King is much to blame for even this."

"Ay, he is," Arundel interrupted; "if Prince Harry did have the favor of the court, as he deserves, we'd sure hear less about these same companions and their influence. I do know the Prince is wronged, and could I prove his nobleness upon my sword—"

"Peace, here he comes."

And at that moment Harry entered hurriedly, a look of deep anxiety upon his face. "My lords," he cried, "I know not what to do. My liege is not recovered, and it may be long ere he can give me counsel. This question of alliance cannot wait, for time will make it valueless and vain. Lord Scrope would have us begin negotiations without the King's

consent, yet I do hesitate. My lord chief justice, we know thy wisdom well; prithee advise us how we shall proceed."

The bishop wondered to hear the Prince turn to that counsellor most likely to oppose him, but Harry knew full well that all the others, either out of personal love for him or hate of the archbishop, the King's friend, could not advise him fairly; while Gascoigne, noble, upright and dispassionate, swayed by no personal feelings in the matter, belonging to neither of the rival parties, would reason wisely and give his counsel freely and boldly without fear or favor.

So, when Sir William, after some moments' thought, answered: "It seemeth best to me that we should, without delay, form this alliance with the power of Burgundy," Harry was content; and ere an hour had passed all plans had been completed, and the Earl of Arundel, chosen by the Prince as his chief ambassador, had received full instructions for his duties, and had departed to prepare for the long journey.

The council ended quietly, but when the Prince bade them, at last, good-night, and left the chamber, Bishop Beaufort laid a hand upon Lord Suffolk's arm, and whispered softly,—"I have that to propose to thee, my lord, which will meet thy acceptance. Assemble the chiefs of our party at my London palace on Thursday week. Thou dost guess my purpose, but breathe no word of it, for walls and trees are well supplied with ears!"

CHAPTER III.

"Andronicus, would thou wert shipp'd to hell,
Rather than rob me of the people's hearts."
TITUS ANDRONICUS.

UPON leaving the lords, the Prince at once sought his father's apartment, and there found the King already dressed in night apparel, and lying upon his couch, while Richard de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, attended him.

The sick man turned restlessly, and frowned, as his son came forward and made a deep obeisance.

"What, hast thou left the Council Chamber, Harry? And why dost thou come here? Wouldst thou have me troubled by thy plans and hopes?"

"Methought your Highness would desire a brief account of all that hath been accomplished."

"And wherefore should I wish to hear of it? My Lord of Warwick, we give you leave, but go not farther than the outer room."

The Earl withdrew and the Prince took his vacant seat. The King continued coldly: "I oft do wonder, Harry, at the consideration thou dost show where there is no need of it. Have they not all decided as ye wished? Will not ye form alliance with the duke?"

"We so decided, sire," began the Prince; but the King interrupted:

"Why, thus it is—said I not thou wouldst have thy way? Then, wherefore hast thou come to tell me of it?"

"My liege, we are thy council, and are bound in honor to perform that policy which seemeth best to us. If thou considerest that we do our country wrong, thou shouldst dismiss us from the government. But, if not, then I do beseech thee, give us thy support."

"Nay," said the King hastily, "I know not that what ye propose is wrong; what likes me not is that 'tis not their judgment, but their affection for thy person, Harry, which wins these nobles ever to thy wishes. 'Tis not the part of wisdom, when a country makes war because its prince is fair of feature."

The young man bit his lip, thinking of how he had asked Gascoigne's counsel, while knowing that the judge regarded him with little favor. But although quick to justify his friends, he ever hesitated to defend himself before his father, so only answered humbly: "I do assure thee, sire, that thou dost mistake. They, every one, consider this alliance to be the fountain of the greatest good unto our England. Therefore, prithee, grant us thy approval; for, if thou dost deny it, I must yield unto my sovereign's wishes in this matter. And, believe me, sire, 'tis a policy that cannot be lightly tossed unto one side without much loss. Wilt thou not consent?"

The King made an impatient motion with his

hand. "Why dost thou trouble me? The thing is done."

"Not so, my liege; the council are agreed, and our arrangements, for the nonce, complete; yet, if thou bidst me, we will stay our hand. What wouldst thou have us do, my gracious liege?"

With the responsibility thus thrown upon him, the King turned irritably upon his pillow, and answered with annoyance: "I am too ill to trouble with the matter. Make what treaty ye desire. 'Twill be thy deed, not mine; and if results are evil, thou mayst bear the blame. And now, that thou hast wrung consent from me, prithee depart the chamber and be gone."

Sadly the Prince arose and came near the couch. "Sire, what have men told thee, that hath caused thee to judge me so unworthy of thy love? I am thy son, and when thou liest ill, my place is here beside thee. Why is it that thou wilt not ever let me stay?"

A heavy frown gathered upon the King's brow, as he answered: "Thou wilt provoke me presently to wrath. Have done with pretence, Harry; thou knowest well what an unnatural son thou art to me. Nor shouldst thou wonder at my present coldness when thou dost never give me a kind word save when thou desirest some favor in return. What wouldst thou to-day, that thou remainest? Speak, and be gone. My patience is fast oozing from my finger-tips."

The Prince sank on one knee beside the bed. "Sire, I do beseech thee, hearken to me. Thou dost misjudge me cruelly. I vow I wish for nothing save to be near thee in thy present illness. Your Highness knows—"

"I know that thou art false," cried the King hotly, raising on one elbow,—"hence from my side, and get thee gone to London. There shalt thou find companions nobly fit for that base living which sullies thy bright name. Dost think I can believe thee when thou sayest thy heart's desire is to linger here, instead of carrying on thy drunken revels with Falstaff, Poins, and other of thy fellows? Nay, I believe thee not; nor will I listen longer to thy protests. Call me my Lord of Warwick, and depart."

With a deep sigh, the Prince rose to his feet, kissed the reluctant hand held out to him, and left the chamber.

CHAPTER IV.

"Before God, I am exceeding weary."
SHAKESPEARE—HENRY IV.

HAVING summoned the earl, Prince Harry took a torch from an attendant's hand, and, although the hour was late, did not seek his couch, but hastily traversed numerous dark passages until he reached another and distant part of the castle. Pausing just long enough to give the countersign to an armed guard, the Prince entered a narrow doorway, passed down a long antechamber and rapped sharply with his sword-hilt against a heavy oaken door thickly studded with iron nails.

At first, there was no response; but finally, after repeated knockings, a voice answered; footsteps were heard upon the crackling rushes of the floor, the bolts shot back and the ponderous door swung wide, revealing a large chamber, almost bare of furniture save for a couch covered with silken robes and cushions, an oaken table, and some heavy chests, richly carved, which served alike for seats and for repositories. The walls were hung with tapestries, and high vaulted windows admitted a faint gleam of moonlight. The dying embers of a fire cast a weird light upon the black woodwork, seeming only to increase the gloom.

Standing in the doorway was a man of scarce

twenty years, tall of person and with a certain proud nobility in his bearing which betokened his high rank. He was dressed in a loose nightrobe of fine silk, and in the flickering, uncertain light cast by the torch, his face was seen to be one of surpassing sweetness, showing a nature more lovable than powerful. Every feature was clear-cut and delicate in outline, and no beard marred his beauty. His luxurious brown hair fell about his shoulders, and his brown eyes, although heavy with sleep, betrayed the depth and earnestness of his nature. With a slight trace of indignation in his gentle voice, he asked: "Who is it that disturbs my slumber at this unseemly hour, and what's your will that you must arouse me thus?"

"A friend, who seeks the shelter of thy hearth."

"My lord, the Prince," cried the young man joyfully, and would have knelt, but Harry raised him up and embraced him like a brother.

"Nay, let us in, and bolt the door behind us. I will not keep thee long." And the Prince lighted several candles with his torch, and then turned toward his host. "Edmund, 'tis cruel thus to break into thy rest, but I must away at sunrise, and longed to see thee ere I left this place. Hast any food? 'Tis many hours since I did break my fast."

Silently, Lord Mortimer, the fifth of his line to bear the title of the Earl of March, placed wine and meat before his royal guest. Two years before, the young prisoner had been placed under the personal

charge of the Prince, and, unknown to the King or any of the court, a friendship had sprung up between them, founded on mutual sympathy and respect, the depth of which neither of them realized. When the Prince had hurriedly refreshed himself, he bade the earl sit beside him on the couch. "It is three months since I did see thee last. Hast thou been well?"

"Ay, my lord, but often lonesome for thee. When didst thou come to Windsor?"

"Some four hours since. And may I never pass four other hours as miserable as these have been. Edmund, I could wish to die to-night."

The earl started. Well as he knew the Prince—and he had been with him in many moods—he never before had heard him speak one word that came not from his overflowing spirits of cheerfulness and warm affection. By the dim light he saw that the Prince was pale, and every line showed an extreme fatigue of mind and body.

"What is it they have done to thee," he cried, "that hath driven the color from thy gentle cheeks? By Heaven, my lord, but thou art greatly changed."

"I have had much to make me suffer, Edmund, but I'll not burden thee with all my troubles. Let it suffice, the King, my father, hates me, and doth believe that I would sin against him. My every smallest action is examined and a base motive judged for each and all. Oh, if he would but put me to the proof! Enough of this! Pray tell me of thy-

self, and drive these gloomy thoughts away from me."

The earl was kneeling now beside the couch on which the Prince had thrown himself, exhausted. With gentle hands he smoothed back the brown hair, and smiling into the deeply earnest eyes, said softly, —"Prithee, sleep, my lord, thou needest rest, and I will watch here by thee for the night."

"My heart is heavy, and I cannot sleep. Oh, Edmund, didst thou know my weariness! The King, this morning, chose to hunt at Windsor, and so the council met here, afterward; but I was late, having no word of it till two of the clock, then coming hot from London. Thou knowest that the King hath been much ill. The chase had brought his sickness back again, and he opposed our measures fiercely, and did denounce me as a traitor to him—"

"A traitor, lord!" exclaimed the earl hotly; "what is this folly that thou sayest? Even the King would not call thee a traitor."

"Dost thou not believe it of me?"

"No, on my soul! They lie that call thee that. And if there came a dozen witnesses to prove it to me, I still would say they lied between their teeth. No man who's looked into thine eyes, my Prince, would dare to call thee by so vile a name! Oh, would that I might prove it with my sword!"

The Prince laughed softly and took his friend's hand in his. "Ah, Edmund, I thank thee for those gracious words! As for the King, I understand my-

self hath tried him sorely in his present illness; though how, i' faith, I wot not; yet when he doth oppose our policy, and give as his reason, because my private life pleaseth him not—this is sure not justice."

"What dost thou mean, my lord, thy private life? Thou art free from even thought of sin."

The Prince dropped his eyes and a faint flush mantled his cheeks. "No man is pure and stainless, Mortimer; my father speaks of those men of London whom I do choose to call my intimates. He likes them not—and I do perceive that thou too wilt condemn me for their friendship."

"They should not have thy fellowship, my lord; a man less noble than thyself, brave Prince, might use them without fault; but as for thee, the highest, noblest, purest in the land is but scarce worthy to be called thy friend."

"Nay, but, my Edmund, there thou touchest the point where my defence doth lie." And the Prince smiled confidently into Lord Mortimer's grave face. "I need these comrades, for my affections must find a ready channel to escape, ere they do smother me. Thou wouldst that I should have the very noblest? Why, so would I. But how, if it cannot be? Two friends have I at court—Scrope and Arundel—they love me well; yet, in good truth, they are as formal as the court itself; treat me with all the ceremony that my state demands, and scarce do dare address me save on the nation's business. My uncle Beau-

fort, and those who join with him in council, know me and even love me,—as the Prince,—distrust me, as a man. Canst thou not see how this cold disapproval of myself, these formal greetings, and state ceremonies, make me to feel that such men are no friends? Then, when affairs of state do press me down, these merry London men, so frank, so bold, so ever ready with a song or jest, even if it sometimes goes too far, yet stir in me the spirit of my youth; make me forget my state and live with joy as simply Harry Monmouth, not the Prince. We're man and man together, nothing else; and even now, I cannot think that there is any wrong in these companions. What dost thou know of a free, merry life? Nothing, my Edmund, nor do many men; but these same midnight frolics are to me the very sauce of life, which gives me courage to eat in patience the good, wholesome food of unpleasant duties and formalities. When that my sword is constant in my hand, or every hour filled up with stern necessity for action, then I am content; but, at other times, I need the play to help me with the work."

In his earnestness, the Prince had risen and paced the apartment with restless steps. Now he stopped before his friend, and looking appealingly into his face, said gravely: "I have spoke thus far to justify my actions to thyself; for thou alone, dear Edmund, dost know the contents of my heart's most secret chambers. I would not have thee think me so unworthy as men do picture me."

The earl, with a quiet, trustful smile, raised the Prince's hand to his lips, as he replied, "Sweet lord, I do believe thee guiltless of every wrong. But methinks there is some other sorrow in thy breast than these misjudgments cause. I prithee, tell it me, and let me give what comfort to thee lies within my power."

"Thou shalt know, Edmund," cried the Prince impulsively. "Thou art a lover and canst understand the anxious feelings of my lover's heart."

The earl started. "What! Art *thou* a lover—my lord, who is the woman that thou lovest? Surely," he faltered, "she's not found in London?"

The Prince flushed deeply. "Is't possible that thou dost know me well, and yet dost judge me guilty of so great a wrong as this? I'll love no maid who cannot be my queen."

"Nay, forgive me, that I even thought to doubt thee," pleaded Mortimer. "I know thy purity, my noble Prince. Ah, would to God, that all men were as pure! Who is the lady that thou soon shalt wed?"

A sudden remembrance of his passionate statement, and all it meant, made the Prince tremble, and for very shame turn his head away from the earl's gaze. "Edmund, I fear me, that in my great haste I have made a vow to thee that is already broken. Yet, when thou hast heard all, thou wilt pardon me. As thou art a lover, look on this and tell me if she be not worth a prince's love."

He drew from his bosom a piece of heavy vellum

and placed it in the earl's hands. Mortimer swiftly crossed to where the candles burned dimly in their silver candlesticks, and gazed long and eagerly upon the painting there.

A young girl's face smiled at him with a smile so tender, so wistful, so full of love and longing, that Mortimer's hand trembled with quick emotion. She was very young, yet gave promise of a radiant beauty. The delicate outlines of her oval-shaped face, the high, broad forehead, the waving hair, the small, exquisitely cut mouth, and the sweet and gentle expression, all fascinated one with an indescribable charm; yet her deep, lustrous eyes, touched with a certain melancholy, showed the pure and fearless soul beneath the beauty.

Not that Lord Mortimer perceived all of this at once, nor, indeed, would most men have discovered it within that by no means perfect picture. But the Prince, a first love stirring in his heart, seeing all this, and more, had given the sweet face every attribute of a goddess among women. Nor would he rest until the earl agreed that a noble character was painted there.

"Is she not glorious? My blood doth throb with every heart-beat when I look upon that beauteous face." So spoke the Prince, and seizing again the picture from the earl's hand, he pressed it hotly to his lips, then swiftly placed it again within his bosom.

"Who is this lady?" demanded the astonished nobleman.

"Who is she but a princess; a queen, indeed; my queen, and England's, ere the year be passed. Oh, God, would that it could be thus!"

The sudden agony of despair in the clear voice brought the earl swiftly to the couch upon which Harry had thrown himself again.

"My lord, open thy heart to me. This lady,—i' faith, but I could love her too upon one look at yonder drawing of her—hast thou seen her? Is she of noble birth? And will she wed the greatest prince in Christendom?"

Harry Monmouth sat for a moment with his head bowed in his hands, despair written upon every feature. Then with a little start, he raised his head proudly and looked into the earl's eyes with firm, determined gaze. "Edmund," he answered, "I did forget myself,—that face doth make me mad with unreasonable passion, nor have I yet succeeded in driving these hurtful feelings from my heart. Thou askest of the maiden—I have never seen her, nor do I know aught of her save that she attendeth upon France's most mighty queen. The painter of my precious miniature knew her and loved her and—broke his vows as a monk for her sake. He fled to Calais, and there died in my arms."

Mortimer, with flushed cheeks and shining eyes, gazed into the Prince's face. "And thou dost love

her, never having seen her? And he who was thy rival is now dead? Ah, my lord, how glad I am that thou canst be so happy!"

"For God's sake, Edmund, silence!" cried the Prince, seizing his friend almost roughly by the shoulder. "*I* happy? *I* to wed where my poor heart desireth? Thou forgettest that I am the Prince of Wales! Oh," he cried bitterly, "how can men be so blind as to envy a prince his place? Poor fools! They little wot the misery that lies behind the power."

He clinched his hands and paced the floor in anguish, while the startled earl sat motionless and dumb at this sudden outbreak. In a moment, however, Harry had regained his self-control, and seating himself by his friend's side, said gravely, "Edmund, forgive me for my harshness—even the thought of happiness tormented me. Listen. I have this day despatched the Earl of Arundel to Burgundy. He is accompanied by certain companies of soldiery and goeth to form alliance with Duke John, the Fearless. This noble duke possesses a noble daughter, and I do seek to win her for my bride."

"But she whom thou dost love?" cried the amazed earl.

"Ah, Edmund, what have I to do with love?" asked the Prince sadly. "I can wed none but she who is my equal in high rank, and who can bring our nation a proper dower. This marriage must be

made for England's good, and I must burn this picture and root out that longing which hath entered my weak heart. Edmund, never speak to me of happiness!"

The earl, deeply troubled by the suffering in the Prince's face,—a suffering intensified by the memory of the King's taunts about his motives for desiring the present union—used his utmost endeavors to soothe his troubled guest, and at length the Prince, wearied by the events of the day, and his heart lighter since he had told his troubles to his ever-ready confidant and friend, begged the earl to share the narrow couch, and in a moment the two young men had gone together to the land of dreams.

CHAPTER V.

"Best friend, my well-spring in the wilderness."
GEORGE ELIOT.

WHEN the first rays of light entered the high, unshaded windows, the Prince sprang up, and would have softly left the earl's room, but Mortimer awoke and begged him eagerly to stay.

"Thou sure wilt break thy fast with me, my lord; we have not been together for so long, and there lie upon my tongue a thousand questions, which, for thy weariness, I dared not ask when thou didst come to me so late last night."

The Prince hesitated, desire battling against duty in his heart, then yielded with a smile. "I must be gone to London in an hour, but there is much that I may know of thee before the glass runs out. Tell me, first, hast seen the Lady Anne again, my lord?"

The bright color flashed into the earl's cheeks, and, pushing aside a piece of tapestry, he opened a small door, showing a garden charming in the early morning light.

"Seest thou these roses, good my lord? But one week since she hunted with the court in Windsor Forest, and ere it was dusk stole from her chamber to wander here alone. I had op'ed my door to feel the cool night breezes from the south, and, behold, there was a vision all of white and gold.

Her robe as pure as lilies of the field, the last red sunbeams falling on her hair and clothing her with such a radiance that mine eyes were dazzled by the beauty of it. A moment did she stand, then plucked a rose; and, all unconscious of my presence near, she sang an evening hymn, in such a voice, so soft, so gentle, and so sweetly pure, as sent my very heart into my mouth and made me long to seize her in my arms. She did not turn, but slowly passed away. And I, a captive fool, could only stand and watch, longing to woo her ere I had scarce seen her; yet, in all honor bound to silent love. Oh, my good lord, dost thou then love a woman and still wouldst keep me in confinement here?"

Then as a look of sorrow and reproach came into the Prince's face, Mortimer sprang forward and humbly knelt before him.

"Sweet lord, forgive me, for I meant not to reproach thee. I know that thou dost show me every kindness. This chamber here has grown to be a home; and for my raiment, 'tis worthy of a prince. Servants attend me when I desire service, and even thou lettest me freely breathe the air and wander at my will in yonder garden, on my plain word that I will hold no speech with any whom by chance I may there meet. Mine is not a prisoner's life, my lord, and yet I've dared to blame thee for thy kindness. Canst thou forgive me such ingratitude?"

"Nay, Edmund, I blame thee not," answered the Prince sadly. "Thou art my friend, and more than

any man hast thou received my love. Gladly would I give thee freedom, an' I could do so with any thought of honor. But when my father gave thee unto me to guard as a close prisoner of state, I pledged my word and life to keep thee safe. Thou hast not forgotten how the Duke of York, and his unnatural sister, Lady Spencer, so artfully stole thee away from Windsor, seeking to use thee as a weapon 'gainst my father. The King is my liege lord, and if need come, I would give my life to guard for him the throne. Therefore, since thou wert put within my personal charge, my honor is concerned to keep thee fast. And if thou heldest free intercourse with others, how could I guard thee then?

"Nay, Edmund," Harry added gently, looking into his friend's eyes, "'tis hard for both of us. Believe me, my heart sorrows as thine own; but, until my lord and father freely grants thee freedom, we must rest content."

"Would not he grant it, if thou didst ask it, lord?"

The Prince threw back his head impatiently. "Thinkest that I would not long since have asked it, did I not know the answer? Nay, he hates thee, Mortimer, nor would he be well pleased did he but know how truly I do love thee—thou who art my rival for the throne of England."

"Now, by Heaven, my lord, you do me wrong," cried Mortimer hotly. "If certain foolish men proclaimed my rights in opposition to thy father's rule, it seemed but justice then; but *thou,* Prince Henry,

art my sovereign lord, and when thy father's dead, this knee, which often bends to thee as prince, shall bow to thee as king. Now, as I am a Mortimer, I swear—"

"Hold, Earl of March," sternly replied the Prince. "I will not let you swear an oath to me. If, when my liege is dead, the Parliament which placed the crown upon his royal head shall make thee king, instead of Harry Monmouth, dost think I will not bow me to its will and greet thee as my lord? And if it makes me king, because of that, and not because of any love for me, I shall expect a like obedience upon thy part. But this is not the time or place to swear allegiance to me. Edmund, the day is come. I must to horse."

"Dear my lord, in truth 'tis early yet. Thou wilt not go? Thou art still fasting."

"I' faith, I had forgot to eat. Pour me a glass of wine. Here's to thy health, my lord, and mayst thou win Anne Stafford for thy bride."

The earl sprang forward with a joyful cry. "My lord, wilt help me? Else what chance have I, a prisoner within these four gray walls?"

"Hark thee, Edmund, if the lady again enters yonder garden, thou mayst woo her with all thine eloquence. Thou seest how I trust thee, but we'll not wait on chance. Tell me, first, dost really wish this maiden for thy wife?"

The earl's blazing eyes looked full into the questioning ones before him. "As I live, my lord, I

will wed no maiden, if it be not she. And if I'm ever a free man again, 'twill be my dearest task to seek to win her."

"Now, on mine honor as the Prince of Wales, I swear that thou shalt have her!" And Harry Monmouth seized his friend's hands in both of his, while his sweet, winning smile broke forth. "I must, myself, woo this lady for thee, since thou canst not. Remember, I'm a lover, as thou art, and knowest all the jealousies within thy breast. Trust me, Edmund, and 'twill go hard if thou hast not a bride."

And with these amazing words ringing in his ears, and his heart surging with passion, hope and fear, the earl found himself alone with his own thoughts.

CHAPTER VI.

"He did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,
Even in the presence of the crowned king."

HENRY IV.

IN the year 1411, King Henry's court appeared, to foreign nations, united in giving full support and allegiance to the monarch. The successive rebellions against his authority had each in turn ended disastrously for the rebels. The great family of the Percys was almost destroyed, the youthful heir, Henry, Second Earl of Northumberland, being at this time an attainted and penniless exile in Scotland, while Archbishop Scrope, Mowbray and Hastings had suffered traitors' deaths with such promptness as to make men exceedingly careful in betraying their disaffections. There remained, however, a strong party in decided opposition to the King, noblemen who were governed by conscientious scruples concerning the monarch's right to rule; and those whose love of justice had rebelled against Henry's misgovernment. To these had now been added a third and more numerous class, chiefly members of the Beaufort party, whose motive lay in their love and admiration for the Prince.

Harry Monmouth, as the common people de-

lighted to call the hero whom they almost worshipped, had spent his youth at war in Wales under conditions which might well have made a man of strength despair. Although but a boy, he was personally at the head of his troops, directing the campaigns, leading in the battles, and during the cruelly hard intervals of preparation, sharing the keen sufferings of his men, bearing all the blame when the court refused the sorely needed money and supplies, even selling his few jewels to buy food; and for reward, receiving only the bitter complaints of the neglectful court at the lack of victories over an enemy that would not fight. Bravely and steadily had he remained year after year at his post, struggling against the ignorant superstitions of his men, the inhuman methods of warfare used by his enemies, the constant discouragements and unexpected obstacles that he encountered, and the ever-increasing privations which he was powerless to relieve.

When he at last came to London, leaving Glendower temporarily exhausted, he was already a general of strength and power, although the court believed him but an ignorant boy. In the year 1407 he conducted several successful campaigns in Wales, but London was henceforth to be his home. In the autumn came his triumphal expedition to Scotland, where his memory must often have recalled the far-away days when he accompanied King Richard to that land and was there knighted by him—days so

quickly followed by his father's usurpation of the throne. And perhaps the thoughts of the Prince were not entirely happy ones, for Richard had been very kind to the young boy, and although but a child, Harry had felt a deep affection for him, and his sorrow at the unfortunate monarch's death was accompanied by a feeling of resentment against Bolingbroke for what, to his mind, seemed injustice and cruelty, and this feeling, unexpressed, came between father and son and kept them apart.

After his return from this campaign, young Henry made the capital his residence; and with an active love for government, which amazed the court, he took his place in the Royal Council, and accepting the various positions of Warden of the Cinque Ports, Constable of Dover and Captain of Calais, offered him chiefly for the purpose of replenishing his exchequer, he proved himself not only nominal but actual governor of these places, visiting them in person and attending to his various necessary duties with a consistency and thoroughness which was worthy of the highest praise.

Shortly after this he had become President of the Royal Council of State, and, owing to the ill-health of his father, actual King of England. A warrior of great personal bravery, wise in command, generous in victory and undaunted by defeat; a statesman broad and deep of thought, prompt and decisive of action; seeing with a wisdom far beyond his years the course to be pursued, yet ever ready to listen

with a charming deference to the opinions of others; a man of ready sympathy, perfect trust of all men, and a charming courtesy of manner which could not but win all who conversed with him—such, at the age of twenty-three, was Henry of Monmouth, Prince of Wales.

Little wonder, then, if the English nobles, disgusted with their King's misrule, wearied by his illness, and angry at the peevish temper he displayed, determined that they had borne it long enough, and that the ending should not be postponed. The Prince, the actual king, the man who labored morning and night for his country's good,—why should he not receive the honors of his place, and be free from the King's unreasoning half-control and the opposition so ready to break forth at any moment?

Why not, indeed? What step could be more natural or wise?

"The King that is shall be left unharmed. There is no need of bloodshed in the matter."

Thus spoke the chancellor, and gazed around the little circle with placid contentment in his quiet face. There had gathered in the palace of the Bishop of Winchester the chiefs of his powerful party. A week had passed since that momentous meeting of the council at Windsor and the bishop had spent every minute to the best advantage in his endeavor to win other noblemen to active support of the Prince, yet there was no stranger present to-day.

"I dared not trust a single man among them," the

churchman told his brother sadly. And now, clad in his rich, scarlet robes, a gold chain about his neck, and gems sparkling upon his hands, Winchester leaned back in his great oaken chair, which formed a fit background for his powerful figure, and his piercing eyes kept watch of each movement of his fellows —was every one here present loyal and true? There was his brother, the chancellor—no need to fear that he would prove a traitor to their cause! Had he stood alone, Thomas Beaufort might have become a leader among men, for he possessed strength and courage and tenacity, but by the side of his more powerful brother, whom he worshipped, his own qualities were overshadowed, and he would follow the bishop's lead unfalteringly even if it led him unto death!

Then there was the Earl of Suffolk. The bishop slightly turned his head and gazed thoughtfully at the handsome figure, well displayed in the brown velvet costume trimmed with fur, and at the noble face, serene and earnest. A sincere man, that—swayed by no light emotions, but ever steadfast and true. And as the bishop thought of all the years they two had worked together for their country, he nodded his head slightly and a satisfied smile played about his lips. Never yet had the earl failed him in time of need—he would not fail him now.

There fell upon his ears a clear young voice, crying in answer to Beaufort's peaceful words,—"Ay, if there be no bloodshed, it were well; yet I, for one,

would gladly strike a blow and give my life, if need be, for our Prince."

The bishop glanced quickly at the speaker, who had paused in his restless pacing to and fro and stood opposite to the churchman. A gallant figure, dressed gaily in crimson and fine linen, his sparkling eyes fixed on the chancellor, his gleaming teeth showing in his smile,—was he to be trusted? Had it been unwise to admit him here among them? Surely not;—impulsive, brave and loyal, he was a true son of Earl Suffolk, inheriting his father's noblest qualities, to which he added the vigor and enthusiasm of youth. Bishop Winchester felt his heart go out toward the handsome knight. "Sir Michael," he said, "thou and Earl Arundel—i' faith, but I do wish that he were here—would sooner fight than eat, I dare be sworn. Wilt thou not be content if we do win in peace?"

The gallant De la Pole flushed in some embarrassment. "I meant not that I did desire war," he answered quickly, "but 'tis my wish to prove my loyalty to Harry Monmouth by greater sacrifice than peaceful words."

"As yet, methinks I do not understand thy purpose, gallant Beaufort," came a low voice from a far corner of the apartment. "How is it that thou wilt dethrone the King in peace?"

The bishop started a little, and leaned forward. Here was a man he had not fully considered. Baron Scrope of Masham, Knight of the Garter, the royal

treasurer! A noble who was called the Prince's dear friend; who had been honored and raised to mighty places; who, by every tie of gratitude, was beholden to Harry Monmouth. His first wife had been of royal blood, and now it was the gossip of the court that he would wed the Lady Joan Holland, whose father, the second Earl of Kent, had been a half-brother of King Richard, and whose sister Margaret had so recently become the bride of Thomas of Clarence. If Prince Harry became king, what future would be too great for Baron Scrope? There could be no question but that he would be loyal and true.

The chancellor's voice broke in upon the bishop's thoughts. "My lord baron, our purpose is, briefly, this: That we shall all appear before the King, say to him plainly that he is too ill to be upon the throne, and with gentle but persistent argument convince him that 'tis best he should resign."

"And dost thou think we can accomplish this?" inquired Scrope earnestly.

"Ay, and wherefore not?" asked Winchester. "My royal brother is very weak and ill. Thou knowest Prince Harry gained his consent to the Burgundian alliance,—why can we not obtain it for our cause? He will be entirely unprepared for our proposal, and we will not permit him to regain his self-control. Before he doth entirely understand our purpose, we shall have secured his signature to the form of resignation."

The baron raised his hand to his face, seeking to hide the half scornful smile upon his lips, but his voice was very deferential as he said,—"Ah, my lord bishop, thou hast planned it well. It appears that failure be impossible,—unless the King is warned."

"And that is a danger which we need not fear," answered Winchester sharply, "no man shall know what we do meditate except we five alone, and wouldst thou dare to doubt one of us, baron?"

"Upon mine honor, no!" cried Scrope hastily. "Were I so evil minded I should deserve to die upon thy sword. And yet, lord bishop, this plan doth please me not."

"And wherein doth it fail to please thy mightiness?" cried De la Pole, in sudden anger. He did not like the baron, chiefly, perhaps, because he dearly loved the Prince, and was jealous of Scrope's place in his affections. "Is not the wisdom of my Lord of Winchester beyond dispute? And wilt thou presume—"

"Michael, hold thy peace," cried Suffolk sternly, then turning to the baron,—"My Lord of Masham, I pray thee pardon him. He is ever ready to say that which he doth not mean."

The young knight stood silent in obedience to his father's command, but his eyes spoke for him eloquently.

Scrope glanced at him and smiled tolerantly. "Every man is entitled to his own opinion," he replied. "Thy son, Lord Suffolk, did but express his

preference for that advanced by my lord bishop; and yet, Sir Michael," he continued, addressing the young man with a certain frankness which became him well, "I intended only to echo thine own desire —that we might strike a blow for Harry Monmouth."

If De la Pole was hot-tempered, he was also quick to acknowledge himself in the wrong; and, ashamed of his outbreak, he crossed to the baron's side and humbly said, "My lord, I crave thy pardon for my hasty words. With all my heart would I fight by thy side in such a cause."

"Nay, I was not offended," answered Scrope good-humoredly, then turning to the others, he continued gravely,—"My lords, ye do know the frank and loving nature of our Prince, and ye have not forgot his humility toward the King. I' faith, he will not relish our obtaining Henry's resignation by using force when he lies so ill."

"Thou hast mistook my purpose," cried the bishop, but the baron raised his hand,—"nay, pardon me, I meant not to put it thus, but thou art depending upon the King's illness for thy success. Now, my lords, we are all good swordsmen, let us arm ourselves, gather our allies about us, and demand the coronation of the Prince. Harry is beloved by the Parliament," he continued persuasively, "and a small display of force will conquer the entire land. Thus might and not—I am loath to call it trickery—"

"Search for no other word—I understand thy meaning—" answered Winchester with dignity. "Baron, I might well be angered at what thou sayest, but I will forget it for the Prince's sake. Yet I confess I scarce expected to learn from thy lips that the Prince preferred an armed rebellion to peaceful argument."

Scrope's face darkened with anger, and his small eyes contracted, but when he would have answered, Winchester interrupted him with an appeal to the others. "My lords, how many of ye agree with me?"

The chancellor, Suffolk and Sir Michael cried as with one voice,—"Thou art wise, my lord." And the baron bit his lip, but forced himself to answer,—"It may be that ye are in the right, my lords, I will say no more."

"I thank thee, Lord Scrope," said Winchester courteously, his momentary doubt of the baron dispelled. Then he continued quietly, "We are, then, all agreed that there shall be no fighting. We go peacefully before the King, and if we fail, he cannot charge us with being traitors to him. Brother, thou art our pretty speechmaker,—how shall we address Henry Bolingbroke?"

The chancellor smiled—he did not relish bloodshed, and was relieved at their decision, but in the field of diplomacy he was most successful, and the readiness of his reply showed his ability. "Let our request," he answered, "be clothed in such form as

this: 'Sire, thou hast been very great upon thy throne, and men do praise the deeds that thou hast done. Now, in thy sickness, which is sore upon thee, do thou throw off this heavy load of state and rest thee from thy labors. Thy gallant son—less noble only than thy gracious self—will take the burden from thee, and while thou still livest and canst guide his youthful footsteps with thy long proven wisdom, he shall rule.' "

"Mayhap, my lords, the King will answer that the Prince doth rule already," suggested Scrope, but his voice was drowned in the general chorus of approval.

"And now, my lords, what arguments shall we advance?" questioned the bishop.

"The greatest one is the support of Parliament," suggested Suffolk.

"Thou art right," cried Winchester exultingly, "Henry doth fear the Commons more than the Lords. Our strength doth lie therein. Oh, we shall assuredly win his resignation."

"But if we fail, may we not fight for it?" asked Sir Michael pleadingly.

Winchester smiled, but ere he could reply the baron exclaimed, "Lords, is not your purpose a foolish risk? The King doth lie almost at point of death. In a few days he'll trouble ye no more."

"The King may live for a full score of years," answered Earl Suffolk; "those for whose death we hunger seldom die save by foul means. Boling-

broke is still young and doth hold out against his two years' sickness valiantly. Wouldst thou have the Prince continue to submit to his jealous opposition?"

Scrope made no reply, but his heart filled with anger. By what trick did they defeat each of his propositions and make him appear disloyal to the Prince? Not one of them was as true as he!

Michael, impatient of this interruption, again addressed the bishop, "May we not fight if we do fail in peace?"

Suffolk frowned at his restless son, but Winchester answered his question thoughtfully.

"Sir Michael, I myself would gladly draw my sword to win this victory for our Prince, and yet methinks we could not win in open battle. The Lord Arundel is in Burgundy, and beside ourselves here present, and noble Courtenay, the chancellor of Oxford, there are but few of any prominence. York and his brother might join our forces, but Warwick and Westmoreland, although they do love Harry Monmouth well, would not consent to fight against their king. And then," he continued sneeringly, "consider the archbishop, with all the servile fellows that do bow before him for pardon of their sins! And my nephew Thomas, because of those paltry marks I would not give him—had I no right to Somerset's bequest, I, the executor of my brother's will?—doth hate me bitterly, and I believe would even fight his brother for my sake. Then there is Stanley, and

the lord chief justice, Salisbury, and Talbot of Hallamshire, and even Courtenay's cousin, the blind earl of Devon, who, they say, doth still wield a valiant sword. And finally," he added, "if Westmoreland chooses to fight against us, his sons, both John and Ralph, would join their father and, perchance, also the husbands of his daughters—Lord Mauley, Lord Dacre, Sir Thomas Gray and Sir Gilbert Umfreville. Where shall we find swords to oppose this host?"

"We are fortunate," said Suffolk grimly, "that Westmoreland's nine sons by thy sister Joan are still too young to arm themselves for battle."

In spite of their anxiety a general laugh greeted this speech, and the chancellor said: "Thou seest, Sir Michael, that to fight were madness. If argument do fail us, there is no hope."

The knight acknowledged, with great reluctance, that a battle upon these terms would be worse than useless; whereupon the bishop said, smiling, "Courage, my lords, let us not talk of failure until the deed be done."

"When shall we appear before the King?" asked Suffolk.

"Let us make no delay," cried Baron Scrope, "the King is very weak, and he may rally; moreover, time will make our purpose dangerous."

"Then do we make our final play without the help of a strong argument," answered the chancellor. "To me it seemeth best that we should wait until we

receive definite information from Earl Arundel. Can we appear before the King with the tidings of a victory, we can use it as a weapon against him."

"And if Arundel tells us of defeat?" questioned the baron smoothly.

"My lord, thou lackest confidence," said Winchester, "we must all risk defeat, but it were best that we expected victory. For my part, I agree with Thomas that it were wisest to delay our plans until we hear from Burgundy. What sayest thou, Suffolk?"

"I echo thy words, my lord," the earl answered, smiling, and his son, in response to the bishop's glance, bowed in assent.

"Enough, then," cried Winchester, "we are agreed. Are there other matters to be discussed?"

A general silence answered his question, and the noblemen rose and prepared to take their departure. The bishop stood watching them thoughtfully, then suddenly stepping to the wall, he pushed aside a piece of tapestry and drew forth a jewelled sword, the hilt of which formed a cross. "My lords," he said, "before ye leave this chamber, each one of ye shall swear upon this weapon that ye will be true to our cause."

A general expression of surprise was visible upon every face, but Suffolk came forward at once and took the oath, followed by De la Pole and then Thomas Beaufort. Scrope was last. Winchester watched each face in turn with keen eagerness, and

when the baron advanced his eyes seemed to pierce him through and through. But my Lord of Masham met his gaze fairly, with neither flush nor contraction of the brows. He laid hold firmly upon the sword, and his voice rang clear and decided as he said, "I swear upon mine honor, that in all things I will be true to the cause of my lord the Prince."

Winchester gazed after him with compressed lips. "I was a fool to doubt—any of them!" he muttered beneath his breath. "They will not break an oath made with such solemnity." And from that moment all suspicion left his mind, never to return.

CHAPTER VII.

"Women, like princes, find few real friends."
LORD LYTTLETON.

ALTHOUGH it was the first week of November, a wave of summer heat had crossed the land, and caused the King to leave his winter palace and seek the cooler residence of Windsor. There the court had gathered to ride and hunt at will in the great forests; and on this glorious autumn afternoon, Queen Joan, attended by her ladies, had roamed freely through the gardens, and, at length, arriving at a pavilion, she had seated herself upon a marble bench to listen to a concert by the King's minstrels.

The music seemed a fit background for the low-voiced conversation of the women. Silence, for any length of time, was impossible when there was so enchanting a topic of conversation but half discussed.

"And most amazing of all," murmured the new-made Princess Margaret, "'tis said the Prince doth personally desire this marriage."

The Queen smiled coldly. "Ay, it doth so appear. Of all wilful, headstrong men, he is supreme. The King hath urged him constantly to wed, and sought a daughter of Denmark and Valois; but Harry

answered he'd have none of it. And now, it seems, against the King's advice, he'd win a princess of proud Burgundy! I' faith, one never knows what men will do."

"Dost thou not favor the alliance, madam? Methought the daughter of Duke John had beauty, and certain her dowry will not be small."

Joan raised her eyes to the calm, noble face of the lady by her side. "Ay, Lady Westmoreland, we do not oppose the matter, yet prithee tell us why the Prince would not be guided by our own grave counsel; why he refuses marriage with such hatred, saying,—he will not wed till he can choose a princess that shall truly please himself; yet now, in secret, and with suddenness, before we even guess what is afoot, Arundel is away to Burgundy and sendeth word the duke will give his daughter."

The countess smiled a little. She saw the Queen's displeasure arose because the Prince had not confided in her ere the whole court had been informed of it.

Joan of Navarre, formal and hard of heart, was a superb actress, and always assumed a quick and loving nature, and sought to have both men and women think that she was all affection toward each one. She wished to know the secrets of all hearts and used her place as queen to win their confidences. When Harry Monmouth returned to court, she assumed the rôle of a devoted mother whose every dearest wish was for her son. There

were, indeed, but few—or men or women—who were not false and artificial like herself.

Henry of Bolingbroke was a man of coldness, reserve and craft. He kept his thoughts, his actions, under absolute control. No impulses were allowed to sway him, but every act was planned deliberately. In many of his court, deeply influenced by his character, yet having not his strength and nobler qualities, reserve and coldness became proud hauteur and stoniness of heart, while subtle craft changed to intrigue and deceit, all being hedged about with formality.

Into such a circle came the Prince, fresh from his wars, and the stern problems which had made him a man. With perfect frankness, absence of all distrust, and the easy courtesy which greets all men alike, he sought their friendship, and received, instead, coldness, formality and suspicion of his motives. The nobles could not understand his generous nature, his sincerity of purpose; while he, in turn, shrank from their affectation, and grew to hate the life of ceremony under which all that pertains to nature was concealed. Had the Queen been sincere in the love which she professed for him, he would have gladly opened his heart to her; but he soon read her falseness, grew wearied by her demands for confidences, and the advice she offered upon every subject, and so found it impossible to have any other feeling for her than that which duty called for.

Thus it was that Joan's first knowledge of a Burgundian marriage came not from her stepson, but from a formal announcement to the court. Her Grace was in a most unpleasant humor, though she strove diligently to conceal it. And now, a sudden thought brought a gleam of malicious pleasure to her eyes, as she turned to the Princess, and asked very sweetly: "Will it not be charming, Margaret, to have this high-born lady at the court? There will be feasting and much merriment, and thou shalt sit beside her, at her right, as becomes the wife of Harry's younger brother. Thou wilt enjoy this greatly, wilt thou not?"

Margaret flushed, annoyed by her plain words. She had been the Princess of the court but scarce a year (the King's two daughters having long been married) and little relished taking an humbler place. But with the readiness of one long used to concealment of her feelings, she answered: "Ay, madam, I shall gladly welcome my new sister to the English court."

The slight accent on the word which proudly claimed such near relationship did not escape the Queen, who felt defeated. Then came a gentle voice: "Madam, dost think the wedding will be soon?"

It was Anne Stafford spoke,—Anne, in her clinging garments, reflecting in their exquisite hues the rosy gleams of sunset, her flowing hair, falling in soft waves about her shoulders, her clear,

blue eyes full of pure innocence, her sweet, red lips that never yet had felt the kiss of man—she moved among these goddesses of beauty, these ladies dressed in the height of fashion, and in her sweetness and simplicity seemed like a modest violet beside the haughty rose. As the Queen looked at her, she suddenly remembered that, of late, the ever gallant Prince had sought her out and shown her such attention that the whole court had noticed it and wondered. And the jealous Queen answered with a sudden bitter meaning,—" 'Twill be sooner than *thou* dost desire."

Anne shrank a little at her vehemence, but made reply with gentle dignity,—"Your Grace, I would it were to-morrow. The Prince already grows impatient for it. He thinks that there has been needless delay."

"How dost thou know that he is so impatient?"

"He told me so," she answered quietly.

The Queen sprang to her feet in sudden fury: "He told thee that he did desire it? The announcement to the court came but this morning. The Prince has not been here since Tuesday week. When didst thou learn the marriage would take place?"

Bravely she answered: "Near a fortnight since, he told me, but he bade me keep it close."

The Queen's eyes blazed, and she said cruelly: "I' faith, but it is time that he were married."

The Lady of Stafford smothered a quick sob.

"Madam," she stammered, her cheeks bathed with crimson, "you cannot think—you surely do not mean—"

But a loving hand stole round her slender waist, a gentle voice whispered a word of courage in her ear, and Lady Westmoreland turned and faced the Queen.

"No," she said firmly, "her Grace does not mean that; she knows as well as we that the kind Prince has shown to each in turn of the fair ladies who compose this court such gallantry as he has shown to thee. Moreover, madam" (here she addressed the Queen), "during the absence of the Countess of Stafford, my husband's niece is under my protection; if thou hast aught to say against her, speak to me, or even to Lord Scrope, her future husband."

The Queen made haste to answer soothingly,—"Nay, countess, I meant no thought against her. 'Tis little wonder if our noble son, seeing her beauty, knowing her worthiness, should find a pleasure in her society. We did not know that she would wed Lord Scrope. Mistress, I wish thee every happiness."

Anne would have attempted some denial, but the countess whispered silence, so, with a deep courtesy, she kissed the Queen's fair hand held out to her. But Lady Westmoreland smiled in triumph, for Lady Holland had turned very pale.

Knowing that she had blundered, the Queen

made haste to engage the ever-powerful countess in conversation, and endeavored to show her such attention that she would forget the insult offered to the Lady Anne; for the Earl of Westmoreland was one of the King's most powerful friends and adherents, and his lady, the sister of the King, was acknowledged at the court as second to none, save the Queen herself. There was every reason to suppose, that in an open quarrel between the two, the haughty ladies, as fearless as their lords, would give their countenance unto the countess; and this Joan dared not risk.

Meantime, Anne Stafford stood embarrassed, with many eyes upon her. Then the Princess came slowly forward and held out her hand. "Mistress," she said, trying to give a tone of sweet cordiality to her cold, hard voice, "let us join with the Queen in wishing the prospective bride of Baron Scrope a joyful future. We are glad to know the baron has shown so wise a judgment; and we who know his lordship well, can praise the Lady Stafford for her choice."

Anne stood confused. She knew her mother had not yet given an answer to the baron, and her own lips had prayed he be refused; yet had she accepted the Queen's congratulations, and now could only bow and murmur thanks. Then sounded in her ears a voice whose quiver was not all concealed. It was Lady Holland, sister to the Princess.

"Let me also, mistress, wish thee joy. When last his lordship rode beside my horse, he did not tell me of his happiness. I' faith, he was unkind to an old friend. Pray tell me, hast thou been betrothed many days?"

Something in the eagerness of the tone, the paleness and the trembling of the lips, made Anne aware this lady was her rival; and still offended at the Queen's hard words, she answered with slight hauteur: "His lordship made his offer some time since, but even yet has received no formal answer."

The thought that this delicate young girl should hold Lord Scrope in waiting for a word, while she, with her magnificence of figure, and her richness and elegance of dress, she, with her almost royal blood, must love in vain, and see Anne win the prize—this thought brought color to Lady Holland's cheeks. She was so little mistress of herself in her surprise and consternation at the news, that she would have made an angry, scornful answer, had not another lady claimed Anne's attention.

This was no other than Anne of Conisborough, she who was sister to the Earl of March. "We scarce do know each other, Lady Stafford, yet being so lately a young bride myself, my heart goes out to every betrothed maiden. Thou hast my heartiest congratulations."

"I thank thee, madam," answered the blushing lady. "How does that boy whose advent was so

recent? We hear that he's as handsome as his mother."

The Lady of Conisborough smiled, well pleased with the plain compliment. "My son is well, and growing with much vigor, although he yet is scarce three months old. Oh, how I wish that he were grown a man. I long to see a son of mine at court."

Anne gave her a swift glance of sympathy, thinking of her own young brother, Humphrey, then with a quick remembrance she asked shyly: "Is't long, madam, since thou hast seen thy brother?"

The lady looked astonished. "What, my brother? Oh, thou meanest Edmund, the Earl of March. Why, he's in prison. I do never see him."

"Will not the Prince allow even his sister?"

"I' faith, I have never asked him to allow me. I have not seen Edmund since I was a child."

Anne gazed at her, amazed at her indifference, but ere she could make answer, the Queen exclaimed delightedly:

"Look, here comes the Prince!"

Across the greensward he came, with grace in every movement; his handsome head erect, his tall, symmetrical and perfectly developed figure clad in a rich doublet of soft olive satin, with full slashed sleeves showing his white linen; his shapely limbs covered by long silken hose, his leathern boots pointed and curled upward. From his shoulders

fell, almost to the ground, a cape of cloth, lined with white satin, while above his dark, smooth hair was a cap with feathers which swept his shoulders.

Little wonder that every eye was fixed upon him, and every heart beat faster in the ladies' breasts. As he came nearer, one could see that his oval face was cut as delicately as a woman's; with long, straight nose, and slender and well-curved chin and jaw. His forehead, like his father's, was capacious and indicative of great force of character. The ruddy glow of perfect health was in his cheeks; his brilliant eyes were alight with pleasure and his charming smile was upon his lips as he bent low over the Queen's hand.

"Thou hast deserted us," said her Grace reproachfully.

"Nay, madam," he answered, "say, rather, that duty has, perforce, denied me pleasure. I have but just returned from Hastings.—My Lady Westmoreland, is your lord hunting?"

"Ay, your Grace, he will be back erelong," and the countess smiled upon her nephew affectionately.

With the genial courtesy of manner which had so won the heart of every woman, he gave a happy greeting to each lady, and finally came in turn to Anne Stafford. As he bowed before her with a grace which women might have envied, the Queen addressed him:

"We have this morning only learned of your Grace's intended marriage."

"Ay," he answered, very calmly, "it seemed best to make no announcement until there was some certainty in the matter. A post hath come this very day from Dover saying Arundel, with the fearless duke, arrived in Paris on the twenty-third. I do expect the earl will bring my bride when he returns to England as a victor."

"Art very anxious for this marriage, Harry?"

"Ay, madam, I am most impatient for it."

The Queen glanced questioningly at his calm face. He did not appear as eager as his words would seem to merit. She ventured another stroke.

"We have but now congratulated the Lady Anne on her coming marriage to Lord Scrope."

She watched him closely. He started, and flashed an astonished look at Lady Stafford, then, with a formal courtesy, he said: "I'm glad my friend is to be made so happy."

She did not answer, but she looked at him, and in that instant Harry partly read the truth; and with a lighter heart, yet wondering, he seated himself beside the triumphant Queen.

CHAPTER VIII.

"What is life, when wanting love?"

BURNS.

NEARLY an hour had passed when the King and his party returned from hunting, and the little circle of ladies broke and dispersed, some following her Grace within, others wandering in the gardens with their lords and lovers.

Fortunately, Lord Scrope continued still in London, so Anne Stafford was yet free to accept the escort Prince Harry offered her. His Grace had joined fully in the jests and laughter, and contributed his share toward entertainment of the restless Queen. Nor had the Lady Anne shrunk from her part, yet now they were alone they both fell silent, with thoughts too deep for mere, uncertain words. At last the Prince, sighing, looked at her.

"Now, tell me, wilt thou marry the Lord Scrope? Or is there, as I thought, some deeper truth beneath the Queen's plain words?"

She could not tell him that the countess had meant to shield her from himself, but answered simply: "I' faith, my lord, there is some truth in it. The baron hath asked my mother for mine hand."

"And what's thy mother's will concerning thee?"

"Methinks," she answered, "that she favors it since Lady Westmoreland doth urge consent, yet

doth she wait upon her daughter's pleasure, for, as thou knowest, she truly loved my father, and would not have me wed against my will."

"And thou, fair mistress, what is thy response?"

She turned her eyes away from him and sighed. "I do not rightly know my mind as yet. The baron has been very gentle with me; his blood is noble, his estate is high, his person gallant,—and—he is *thy* friend."

The Prince gave a slight start and said in haste: "Ay, he is truly a good friend to me. A man of noble qualities and mind. A statesman, a brave warrior, and—*my* friend."

He turned upon her quickly and caught a glance out of those innocent blue eyes of hers: "Yet, is there something lacking, fairest mistress? Dost thou desire somewhat more than this? Is it not love that thy heart hungers for?"

"I do not think Lord Scrope hath that within him!"

She spoke half bitterly. She had felt the passion, yet she had conquered it within her breast. She might not wed the man that she had loved, yet did she dread a marriage of pure form.

"And thou," she added wonderingly, "methinks thou wouldst not have me wed Lord Scrope, although he is the dearest friend thou hast!"

"No!" cried the Prince with sudden eagerness. "He is not first,—there is one man beside."

"But what is that to me?" she asked him coldly.

"'Tis much to thee—for *he* doth truly love thee."

Had the earth suddenly opened to receive her, Anne could not have felt such astonishment. Another suitor—and this time a lover. Her mind sped swiftly over the young courtiers—who could be called Prince Harry's intimate? Never for an instant did the Prince's own name occur to her wise mind—she knew him well—and although she had often thought that he did love, she knew that she was not the object of it. Yet who but Scrope, her suitor, and Arundel,—that firebrand whom she had never met,—could really be a friend unto the Prince?

Harry Monmouth turned and smiled upon her. "What sayest thou to a captive lover?"

"The Earl of March," she cried with understanding. And quick there bounded through her memory a thousand pleasing fancies of the man. The Prince, with a keen insight into nature, had never wearied her with praises of him, his nobleness had been implied, not spoken. At first, there was no mention of his name; then, with a sigh: "Poor captive Mortimer—how dearly he would love to feel this wind." She asked him questions, and he answered briefly, leaving her ever hungering for more. She begged him for descriptions of the earl. His answer was,—"I always see his eyes fixed on me with a loving sympathy;—how know I whether they be blue or brown? His mouth smiles at me, and his hand is gentle;—further than this, I am all ignorance."

She prayed to know his age. "When I am glad, he is as merry-young as were a boy; and when I need his counsel, he is old. I never asked him what his years might be." So, during all their time together, he'd told her little, yet excited in her interest, compassion, and an unconscious depth of sympathy. And now the time had come, and Harry spoke.

It was a tale of love that any woman might listen to and feel a stir of pride, and in Anne's heart hope bounded up full high. This man, so gentle,—patient in his prison, loving his captor with such a fond affection, and worshipping a maiden seen in the garden,—choosing her freely among all the ladies—such a lover awoke in her romantic mind the great desire that is born in women. Already she'd put the baron from her thoughts, and ere the Prince had finished with his story, her mind had pictured a life of perfect bliss—love in a prison, comfort from her heart to repay the earl for all that he had suffered. Then came a sudden blot. What of her mother? Harry, with eager eyes, discerned her thought. "Lady, give answer, wouldst thou wed Lord Scrope?"

"Never," she cried, and turned with a quick shudder.

"Thou mayest tell that to the Countess Stafford. As for this matter—trust it all to me. Let all that I have told thee be kept secret, nor think that I would have thee wed a captive. Thy mother and the King shall be persuaded; and when the earl woos thee

for himself, give answer freely out of thy pure heart; but until then, keep thyself a maid."

Anne's mind was in a tumult. She was silent, but as the Prince handed her a lighted torch she looked into his eyes and softly murmured, ere she ascended to her own apartment: "Thou hast my promise that I will not wed."

They did not see a man in riding cloak standing within the doorway, watching them. As the Prince went to his own chamber the watcher ground his teeth and muttered fiercely: "An' I did dare to cross a sword with him, I'd challenge him before the hour was out. Yet may I die a villain traitor's death, if I am not revenged on Harry Monmouth."

The speaker was Henry, Baron Scrope of Masham.

CHAPTER IX.

"Vengeance is in my heart,
Death in my hand.
Blood and revenge are hammering in my head."
TITUS ANDRONICUS.

Is there any force in nature more strong than wounded vanity? This was the sting which kept Lord Scrope awake that autumn night. Anne Stafford's words rang ever in his burning ears—"Thou hast my promise that I will not wed." So, she despised him, did she? Scorned his offer, and chose rather to listen to the Prince in secret meetings and sweet conferences, than be a wife unto a noble lord! And he, her lover (for so he judged Prince Henry), who had pretended to be such a friend; what right had he to linger with the maid, when his alliance with a foreign princess had that very day been announced in London!

Scrope's former lady had died five years before, and the baron now sought another to govern his great house and many servants. He had long admired the Lady Joan Holland, and he thought she loved him. But when Anne Stafford had appeared at court, during the summer months so lately past, he had remembered the wealth of her mother, and thought her winsome beauty a pleasing contrast to the magnificence of the other ladies. Nevertheless,

he had seldom addressed her,—when the Prince's marked attentions stirred within him a sudden jealous resolution to win her hand. Not even pausing for careful consideration, he had sought the countess and made his proposition. My Lady of Stafford had shown that she was pleased with the idea, yet she had not given a free, unqualified consent to it. "I know, my lord, 'tis not customary to consult the maiden, yet my desire is for my daughter's pleasure. Woo her, lord baron, and if thou dost win her, I will give a dowry few kings can equal. My consent shall follow upon hers."

The baron was not altogether pleased thereat. When they were wedded they would be much together. He felt assured he'd tire of her quickly if he must spend long hours at wooing of her. His anxiety was certainly most needless. When at the court the Prince was by her side. The baron's scowls followed them about, yet he was glad to ride with Lady Holland, and every one supposed he was her suitor. To-night, however, he'd sought the monarch's court resolved to win the Lady Anne at once; and now,—he turned upon his couch and softly swore.—Revenge upon them both, Anne and the Prince, that was his only thought. He now remembered that he had hated Harry Monmouth for many moons before he thought of Anne. "What is this man—the son of a usurper—that we should always humble ourselves before him? By Heaven, but he shall not be made the king!" Should he denounce

the Prince as a plain villain, and tell the world he'd never wed Anne Stafford? Such vengeance would be sweet, but the cost high. His place as treasurer the Prince would take from him, and perchance demand to fight as well. Yet if the King should know their resolution to place his eldest son upon the throne—ay, that might save his place, but not his life! As a plain swordsman, he knew the Prince excelled above all nobles who composed the court. As for the lady, should he stoop to win her? No, rather ruin her and let her be. Yet, how could he accomplish this in safety? Truly, the problem was full of certain danger, and when he rose to join the hunting party, the question was still seething in his brain.

And now fate, which determines many destinies, began to play her part. The Queen, the countess (Westmoreland's fair lady), and Anne Stafford were absent from the party, but Lady Holland sat her prancing horse, her head erect, the traces of her tears concealed beneath a veil of finest lace, which obscured faults, but heightened her proud beauty. Then to her side came the Lord Baron Scrope—told her he'd spoken to no person since he came, but sought her first, and might he ride with her? Wondering, she gave permission, then was silent, expecting he would tell her of his marriage. But he discussed with her the London gossip, the weather, so wondrous warm for that chill month, asked her concerning the King's return to health, and finally

begged to know about herself. At last she found her courage all returning, and smiling archly, said, as an old friend: "To think, my lord, that thou didst never tell me the wondrous news about thine own concerns." And when he prayed her for some explanation: "I must congratulate thee upon thy bride. The Lady Stafford announced to the fair Queen that she and thou were formally betrothed."

Appalled at this sudden crisis in affairs, and remembering only his resolve to ruin her, and to denounce the Prince, he cried in haste,—"The thing is false; I will not wed with her."

But ere he could add some explanation, Joan cried passionately:

"Ah, I knew it! How could I doubt the truth for but one instant! Now shame upon that lying, deceitful minx! She thought to shield herself behind thy name. Fancy! She knew of the Burgundian marriage from the Prince's lips before the court had news. The Queen, in fury, charged her with dishonor, and Lady Westmoreland, who knows the truth, declared that she would be erelong thy wife. I could not well believe that she would dare to utter such a bold, unvarnished lie—perchance she thought to throw herself upon thy mercy, thou art so gallant, lord, toward fair women."

"She shall soon learn her error," answered Scrope. Quick as a flash his plan of action lay before him. He had said no word save to declare that they were not formally betrothed; nor would he

chance the anger of the Prince by a plain denunciation of the lady. Rather, his part lay simply in denial, and then in silence. Her own actions, interpreted by Lady Holland's anger, would ruin Anne Stafford as quickly as his scorn. For Henry's court was austere in religious principles, and one breath of shame would mean the lady's dismissal in disgrace.

Joan's voice broke in upon the nobleman's earnest thoughts. "What will your lordship say unto the Queen?"

"I' faith, I'll tell her that the thing is false!"

"And let her judge that Lady Anne's done wrong? What thinkest thou Lady Westmoreland will say?"

Scrope flushed in some annoyance. He had forgotten the countess's part in this. The lady added:

"I cannot understand why they should choose thy name for this affair."

Swiftly he answered: "I can make it plain. Thou knowest Prince Henry will soon wed and with such haste that all men are amazed. Now he would greatly wish that Lady Anne should have an English husband at the court—a husband who was his own nearest friend, who should be honored and exalted high, and who in turn would freely give his wife into the loving arms held out for her. Ah, dost thou understand the matter now?"

"Thou—his dear friend—" the lady gasped, "the plot was made—thou didst not know of it?"

"Nay, belike the Queen's suspicions forced them

to act before the hour was ripe. I have not seen the Prince for nigh two weeks."

"Would he have dared to offer thee this insult?"

"Ah, madam, he knows the love I bear him. Even this I would have gladly given save for one little reason he knew not."

"Thou wilt not do it now?" cried Lady Holland.

"Nay, mistress, not unless he forces me. Listen, fair lady, while I'm a free man, the vow I made of friendship to the Prince would hold me even to such a shame as this. There is one way to save myself from ruin, and yet to keep me from this thing. Were I to marry with another lady, even before the Prince had spoken to me, he would be helpless to do me harm. Thou knowest, Lady Holland, that I love thee; for weeks I've ridden here beside thy horse, longing to speak the words that burned my lips, yet daring not to think that thou wouldst listen. If thou, in pity, wilt but give me hope—"

Trembling with the joy which seemed tenfold the greater after the misery of the long night, she raised her eyes to his, her cheeks flushed scarlet, and she held out to him her white hand.

Eagerly he seized it in his own,—"Lady, speak! I cannot believe such bliss. Ah, what am I that I should ask thy love?"

"A man, my lord, most noble of our court. My love has been all thine for many moons."

Bending low upon his horse, he kissed her hand and murmured softly: "My queen, thou fairest of

the fair. Art thou indeed mine own, my future bride? Let us forget the scandals of the court, forget that we did ever live before, and look upon this present perfect hour as the beginning of our perfect life."

Thus rode they, side by side, she blushing in her happiness, and he murmuring sweet nothings in her ready ear; his thoughts half filled with the pleasure of success, the wound to his vanity partly healed, and yet his longing for revenge still keen, and his mind planning all that he should say to the Queen and the Countess of Westmoreland.

CHAPTER X.

"Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall."
MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

WHAT a day was that at Windsor! For weeks afterward the court was still discussing its events, and time, which solves all problems, seemed to throw but little light upon it. The Prince had had a conference with his father, and then gone direct to London on state affairs. But few among the ladies had joined the hunt,—they lingered at the castle, gossiping about the marriages that were to come.

The Lady Anne Stafford left her apartment at an early hour and sought the chamber of the Countess of Westmoreland. Long were they closeted together, their voices rising and falling in evident excitement. At last the countess cried,—"Thou art a fool! If thou dost not wed him, thou wilt be ruined." Anne's voice was heard in low supplication. Then the countess's anger broke forth again, but the listening ladies could hear no words.

Finally the door was opened and Anne came forth, her eyelids red from weeping and her cheeks pale, but her head held proudly erect, her mouth close shut, every line indicating her resolution. The eavesdroppers shrank back in the dark passage and watched her with eager, curious eyes. With unfal-

tering steps she kept upon her way, and finally stood before the Queen's private room. She knocked and asked for entrance, the chamberlain answered,—her Grace was yet asleep. Bowing, she moved forward to her own apartment and firmly closed the door. The bolts rang home and then all was silent.

Oh, woman, charming woman, how dearly do you love a mystery!

How many hours, think you, flew past before these happenings were known and were discussed by every lady present in the castle? Only two or three had seen Anne Stafford leave the countess's room; but ere ten minutes had slipped away, twenty had learned every detail of it. The crafty countess had dismissed all her attendants upon Anne's entrance, and she now continued alone in her chamber, nor did she leave it for many hours to come. None the less, the details which her maidens furnished to eager listeners of that exciting interview were, if somewhat lacking in veracity, by no means deficient in imagination. The Princess Margaret herself, having heard the story from her maidens, felt that the occasion justified her in early leaving her apartments and mingling with the eager ladies of the court. How greatly she wished that her sister, Lady Holland, was present at a time of such excitement! And it was Margaret who hastened to assist the Queen in her toilet, and from her lips her Grace first heard the story of the morning's events.

A little later an attendant told the Lady Stafford

that her Grace, being informed of her desire for an audience, would receive her at once. Anne instantly set forth, bearing herself with dignity and grace. Dressed, as always, in simple, ungirdled robes, her white neck bare, her sleeves sweeping the ground, she presented a striking contrast to the gorgeously dressed ladies, with their bodices and stomachers richly ornamented, and their long trains heavily trimmed with fur, who were gathered near the Queen's apartments, chiefly that they might watch her as she passed.

Her Grace, dressed in a rich gown of dark green velvet, reclined among many cushions, while a lady of the bedchamber was engaged in combing and arranging her wealth of hair. The Princess stood by her side, lazily waving a huge feather fan, and several ladies of high rank were grouped about the apartment. Anne's swift glance made her aware that the Countess of Westmoreland was absent. As she courtesied low before the Queen, her Grace held out her hand and languidly spoke. "We were informed, mistress, that you desired speech with us. Prithee, say on—we grant you leave."

Anne's courage almost failed her before that host of eyes, yet she answered bravely, in a voice which rang as clear and sweet as a bird's note: "Your Grace was good enough to offer me, but yestere'en, your congratulations upon my future marriage to Lord Scrope. The announcement, as your Grace will, without doubt, remember, was made by the

noble Lady Westmoreland. When Lord Scrope did me the honor to ask my hand, I then did know him but slightly, and prayed delay, that I might learn to love him. The countess has insisted on the marriage, and thought, did she announce it, I would yield. And almost yield to her I did; but the long night brought wisdom, and I am resolved that I can neither love nor wed the baron. My answer to him shall be sent this day, and it behooves me so to inform your Grace."

A murmur of amazement and delight ran through the room, then the Queen asked: "Prithee, what dost thou desire, Lady Anne? Dost thou scorn a union with Lord Scrope, the royal treasurer? Whom dost thou seek? Thou canst not *wed* the Prince!"

Anne's cheeks flushed crimson, and she drew herself to her full height.

"Madam, you wrong me by such insinuations. I will not wed a man I do not love were he the highest in the land. I do not love Lord Scrope. There's one who does—why should I keep her from a happy marriage?" (She gave a meaning glance at Margaret, which brought the color to that lady's cheek, and even the Queen smiled in understanding. The Lady Holland's feelings were no secret.) "Moreover, madam" (Anne was braver now), "I do not love the Prince, nor does he love me. Your Grace doth know the kindness he hath shown to every lady who is of your court. Why should he not show unto

me the same? Yet, I confess, there was a special reason why he sought me so freely; his motive was so honorable and gallant, that could I make it known unto your Grace, you sure would judge him king of noble men."

The Queen's whole face showed eager questioning. "What reason had he, mistress? Prithee, tell us."

Anne's deep eyes gleamed with mischief, as she courtesied. "I trust your Grace will grant to me your pardon. The matter is at present a close secret, but when I have consent to make it known, your Grace shall be the first to hear of it. Have I your Grace's permission to withdraw?"

The jealous Queen, devoured with curiosity, could only bow assent, and feeling she had triumphed over all, Anne proudly passed the eager ladies and sought her chamber.

Ah, if she had but known how short this little triumph was to be!

* * * * * * *

At nightfall came the hunting party back, and with them Lady Holland and the baron. Anne was amazed to see him by her side, and still more, when Lord Scrope said to the Queen: "Will your Grace deign to wish me happiness? The Lady Holland is to be my bride."

"How now, my lord," she answered in amaze, "but yestere'en we heard thou wert to wed the Lady Stafford, and to-day she tells us that she will not

have thee. Methinks thou hast lost no time in thy new wooing."

"Madam, the report of my betrothal to Lady Stafford was not the truth."

"So she informs us, but we understood you had not yet heard of her refusal." Oh, how he hated Anne when he heard that! He almost threw his caution to the winds and cried out that he'd not wed the Prince's mistress, but with an effort he restrained himself and answered coldly: "I do not understand. I never wooed the Lady Anne of Stafford. Your Grace doth know the Lady Holland here is she beside whose horse I've ever ridden, is she with whom I've walked at eventide. I never sought to win another lady."

Words are too weak to picture the scene caused by this speech. The Queen called Anne before her and then charged her with falsehood, treachery and dishonor. The Lady Westmoreland, being much amazed, sought to defend her, and yet doubted her. Before the torrent of the Queen's hot passion poor Anne could find no word to justify all that she had done and said, which seemed so wrong.

Lord Scrope, holding himself severely in control, drew Lady Holland unto one side, and he himself took no further part. He had made his statement, he must now be silent. Finally the King's voice broke above the tumult.

"This goes too far." Then turning to the Queen, "Madam, the charges that thou makest against the

Prince are nothing short of monstrous. We, ourself, have often seen him with this lovely maiden, and never had we cause to think him other than a pure, noble-hearted gentleman. My lords and ladies, this must be kept close. Remember 'tis the Prince of Wales ye slander, and no breath of scandal must cloud his name. As for the statement of my Lord of Scrope we must confess ourself somewhat in doubt. Until the matter can be sifted clear, let us extend to him congratulations that he has won so beautiful a bride."

While the different members of the court were greeting the happy couple, Henry turned to the trembling Lady Stafford. "As for thee, mistress, the story that thou tellest is, we confess, one that much puzzles us. We have ever known Lord Scrope as honorable, and so must judge that thou hast been mistaken. As for the Prince—"

"Sire, you cannot doubt my innocence?"

"We do not doubt his, maiden,—no, nor thine. But such proceedings must from henceforth cease. We counsel thy departure from the court."

The lady spoke no word, save a faint cry; the room swam before her eyes, then all grew dark.

CHAPTER XI.

"I smell a device."

TWELFTH NIGHT.

A WEEK had passed ere the court removed to London, and Prince Harry found space between his duties to attend the Queen. He was welcomed a trifle coldly,—yet that had happened many times before, and caused him no surprise. He heard with calmness of the betrothal of Lord Scrope and Joan Holland, and his congratulations were so hearty, that the baron was greatly reassured. Evidently, Lady Stafford had not confided in him. The Prince had marvelled when he heard the news, yet since he was convinced that Anne would keep her word to him, he judged that the baron, upon her refusal, had sought at once a balm for his wounded feelings, and found it with great promptness; and he was glad that his friend could still be happy.

He was, indeed, amazed on learning that Anne had left the court, but his thoughts swiftly suggested an explanation. Her mother had much desired that she should wed Lord Scrope; therefore, when she refused him, especially after receiving the Queen's congratulations, the countess had doubtless, in an hour of anger, determined that she should no longer enjoy the pleasures of the court.

The Prince now sought out Lady Westmoreland. He knew that she had been Anne Stafford's friend. The countess received him with sincere affection. She had learned to love and trust her gallant nephew, and there existed a bond between them which often roused the Queen's jealousy. She knew her stepson had no love for her.

"Dear madam," began the Prince, as he kissed his aunt's fair hand, "I've sought thee, hoping thou canst solve my many doubts. I learn the Lady Stafford is not here."

"No," answered the countess in some embarrassment (what if he should demand the reason?).

"Methinks I understand why she is gone. Did she not say she could not wed Lord Scrope?"

"Ay, didst thou know of that? Hast thou heard all that happened, when she gave him her refusal?"

"Nay," answered the Prince, smiling, "I have heard naught of it, I trust the scene was not unpleasant for her, since it was at my wish that she refused him."

"What dost thou mean?" cried the countess, startled. *His* wish,—could it be possible the Queen spoke truth? She gazed into his eyes. They were troubled, but wholly innocent.

"Dear lady, wilt thou keep the thing a secret?" She promised breathlessly. He smiled with pleasure and sank down on a cushion at her feet, then calmly told his story.

"I have a friend who is as dear to me almost as

mine own life. Thou wilt be much surprised when thou dost hear his name—it is Lord Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March."

She was amazed. "He who was Richard's heir?"

"The same, my cousin; the King made me his guardian two years since, and every moon has but increased my love. He is a man of noblest qualities, in person handsome, and wise beyond his age. He is the truest friend a man could have, and I have wooed for him the Lady Anne!"

She started to her feet. "He loves Anne Stafford?"

"Ay, madam, and doth seek her for his wife. Sweet lady, sit once more, and listen to me."

She sank back on her cushions, amazed, delighted! "This was the reason that thou wert constantly beside the lady? Thou didst not love her?"

"*I* love Lady Stafford? Surely that were indeed impossible."

She faltered slowly: "Many at the court supposed that thou didst love her."

Harry raised his eyes and gazed at her in much astonishment.

"Is it possible that any could forget that the Prince of Wales must marry for his country? Nay, dearest lady, such love is not for me. My heart must all be given with my hand—unto the Princess Anne of Burgundy. How often have I envied my brother Thomas, who did choose his bride to please himself alone, while I must wed an unknown, for-

eign princess.—But I forget the story of my friend. Since Edmund cannot leave his prison chamber, I pledged my word to woo the lady for him. I was astonished when I learned of thine announcement, but Lady Anne confessed she did not love the baron. Then, for the first time, I told her of my mission, and she hath promised that she will not wed until I can prevail upon the King to set the Earl of March at liberty. Then shall he woo the lady for himself."

The countess sighed with pleasure—she dearly loved a romance, and her mind was quick in its sympathy for the captive lover. She greatly wished Anne's marriage, and so had favored Scrope, although she liked him not. The Prince continued:

"I do suppose the Countess of Stafford, on learning of her daughter's refusal of Lord Scrope, was angered and took her from the court. Is this the truth?"

"Ay, the countess came and took her, and she was greatly angered at events." The Lady Westmoreland gave her answer bravely. The Prince should never know of those sad days from her. She'd tried to tell him, and with entire innocence he had misunderstood. She knew no one at court would dare explain it—then let him live in ignorance of the truth.

"Where has she taken Lady Anne?" he asked.

The countess answered: "She hath been placed in the Minories."

"She will not become a nun?" he asked in haste.

"Methinks that it will be her mother's wish."

"That must not be," he answered with decision. "Would not her mother yield to my request?"

The Lady Westmoreland told him in dismay that she certainly would refuse to listen to him.

"Now, on mine honor, she shall not be made a nun! Canst thou receive her and keep her safe from harm?"

"Thou knowest I must be at the court. I could not shelter her," answered the lady, greatly distressed at his determination. A moment he remained in thought, then his face brightened.

"Ah, methinks that I have solved the problem. Nay, lady, since thou canst not help me, 'tis best that thou shouldst be in ignorance of her abiding place. I know that thou wilt give her thy sympathy."

"Ay, and what help lies in my power. Dost think that she will love the Earl of March?"

"It is my dearest wish," answered the Prince; and smiling in pleasure at the thought of it, he left the countess's side to seek assistance for his future plans. What he accomplished was unknown, but evidently he felt himself successful, for the expression of his face showed a bright happiness which made men wonder. For a brief space he allowed his busy mind to fill with happy dreams. Lord Scrope's marriage was to follow very quickly, and Harry thought of it with the greatest pleasure. Then he must persuade his father to release the Earl of March, and grant him his estates—perchance, on the occasion of his

royal marriage with the Burgundian princess, the King would yield. Then Anne and Edmund should meet at last, and meeting, how could they fail to love each other?

The future seemed so rose-colored to the Prince that he forgot his own unhappiness. Thinking of the love between his friends, he almost forgot the precious miniature which had brought him such sweet, yet bitter hours. His own loveless marriage seemed far away, and even the coldness shown him by the nobles, and the undeserved jealousy of the King, which had of late much increased in strength, even these seemed only fancies beside the realities of his joyful thoughts.

But even while he lingered at the court, the grim black clouds were gathering around him, and the gallant head which he now held so high was to be bowed down with misery and shame. The future often seems most brilliant when we stand upon the threshold of our saddest days.

CHAPTER XII.

"Defend me from my friends;
I can defend myself from my enemies."
MARSHAL VILLARS.

EVENTS were moving quickly during the first days of December. The court was all astir with interest over the coming marriages, and had not yet ceased to discuss the sudden departure of Lady Stafford. Moreover, the King's formal defence of the Prince, being followed by an increased coldness toward him, —certain men of the archbishop's party had been emboldened to show the young man open disrespect, which his friends had resented with such warmth as to bring a rebuke upon them from the monarch. Then came the news of the capture of St. Cloud. The allied forces of English and Burgundians had fought the Orleanists on November ninth and gained a brilliant victory. The time now seemed favorable to the Beauforts for the important step that they had so long contemplated. The Prince's wisdom in the Burgundian alliance had been vindicated; his marriage with the Princess would quickly follow. Already Richard Courtenay, the famous Chancellor of Oxford, had been commissioned to treat with the Burgundian ambassadors for its consummation. Archbishop Arundel and his party

were in retirement, and Winchester did not conceal his sense of triumph.

Gathering the heads of his party together at his palace, the doughty bishop sent a messenger to ask the Prince's attendance, and then addressed the nobles. "My lords, the hour for which we have long waited has arrived. Our policy has triumphed at St. Cloud, the nation waits with eagerness and joy to see the marriage of the Prince accomplished. If we can greet the lady as our *Queen,* Burgundy will refuse nothing that we ask of her. The Prince will join us presently, and then, lords, to the King, and may we never rest contented until he has granted us his resignation."

"Knows the Prince our purpose?" asked Lord Scrope.

"Nay, baron, we've waited till the hour was ripe for action. He has a most unruly conscience. Did he sleep upon't, he might refuse."

"Thou dost not fear he will refuse to-day?"

The bishop laughed. "Not as I shall present it. Nay, my lords, my nephew is still human. What man among us would decline a crown? Moreover, the King's scorn hath angered him. Didst see him flush when Baron Roos passed him without a look? And Arundel said to the King: 'Thy son will rule us after thou hast gone—methinks that Falstaff will be chancellor.' My brother turned his back upon the Prince, and Harry left the room without a word. Thou needst not fear he will refuse consent."

Then Suffolk spoke. "Were it not well, my lord, the arguments thou offerest to the Prince, should chiefly be that this is necessary for England's good? I know his Grace full well, and I misdoubt that he is very loyal to the King."

"Thou needst have no fear," cried Winchester, "I'll put the matter in such a light that he can find no word against it. Lord Suffolk, thou wilt help me, if there's need?"

The earl smiled assent, and was about to answer, but checked his speech, and raised his hand for silence. Footsteps sounded in the passage, the door was flung wide, and the Prince, attended by De la Pole, entered the chamber.

Each man rose to his feet and made as low obeisance as if the project was already a success, and he greeted the crowned monarch. Henry of Monmouth received this homage with a modesty which well became his greatness; he gave a happy greeting to each one in turn, then bidding them all be seated, addressed the bishop.

"Cousin, I judge ye have more news from France. I am in haste to learn the purport of it. Have we won yet another victory?"

"Nay, my lord," Winchester answered quickly,—"no post has come to us since Thursday last; we've sent for thee, sweet Prince, on other matters which we desire to discuss with thee."

De la Pole had made fast the door, and now stood guarding it. The Prince raised his eyebrows as he

noticed this precaution, then glancing around the room, he asked: "Why is not my lord chief justice here?"

"We did not think his presence necessary," answered the chancellor, and a smile was visible upon every face.

Henry frowned slightly. "And my lord, the King? Is he too ill to attend his council?"

"We do not meet as council," answered Winchester; "our presence here lacks all formality. We have a certain proposition to make your Grace; wilt please you hear us?"

"I've come at thy request to listen to thee; speak freely, cousin, as has been thy custom." So saying, the Prince drew off his heavy gloves of dogskin, seated himself where he could see each face, and quietly awaited the bishop's words.

Winchester watched him anxiously. His questions had made the prelate doubtful of his own powers of persuasion, but he nevertheless began his argument with a calmness and assurance which deceived the noblemen about him.

"My lord," he said, "the information which has come to us from France is excellent. It seemeth reasonable to hope that your union with the Princess will speedily take place." (A slight shadow crossed the Prince's face at this, but Henry Beaufort did not notice it.) "We know that 'tis your Grace's desire to honor the fair Princess to the utmost. The plan we are about to suggest will help you mightily

to accomplish this." The Prince merely bowed in silence, and his uncle hurried on. "Other considerations have led us to this step. The King, your father, is growing constantly more ill. His strength departs from him with every new-born day, and he is frequently unable to meet his royal council, and often most important measures wait for weeks till he's gained the health to consider them. This is unjust to our long-suffering nation."

Henry made a quick, impatient movement. "Methinks that I have heard of this before; prithee, say on, my lord, what is your will?"

"Nay, pardon me, sweet Prince," answered the bishop; "we needs must tell thee all our arguments, that thou mayst be convinced our course is just. I beg you, therefore, to consider for a moment the vows your father made when he was crowned, all that he promised to his faithful people, and how he's broken these promises on every hand, denied his words, and treated with injustice the very men who placed him on his throne."

The Prince rose to his feet and answered sternly: "Such falsehoods, uncle, come with ill grace from thee. If thou didst send for me to hear abuse, I prithee give me leave to go from here, or else let these base charges come from the lips of one whom I can answer with my sword."

The Earl of Suffolk, remembering his promise, came swiftly forward. "Nay, good my lord, you bade us to speak plainly, and you will surely listen

to us with patience. My lord, the King, hath made us very angry, when we remember all that you have done—your youthful victories over the brave Welsh, the constant sacrifices you have made, your earnestness and wisdom in the council, your readiness to journey to Calais and your just government over the Cinque Ports, the pureness of your life—"

Henry interrupted a trifle scornfully,—"This eulogy can only weary these waiting noblemen. Prithee, on to more important business."

Suffolk hesitated in some dismay, and the chancellor hastened to add his voice to the discussion. "Your Grace is most impatient; we love to listen to the earl's praises. You are the idol of the people, lord, and long ere this the King had been dethroned, had not the love they bore you kept them loyal. While your father put all his trust in you, and gave you freely that position to which your abilities rather than your rank entitled you, England was content. But now, all this is changed. The King seeks to oppose your wisdom in the council; he greets you with a coldness that is shameful, and suffers without rebuke the insults offered you by those who should at all times bow their knee before your greatness. My lord, he is ungrateful and unjust!"

The young man's cheeks were crimson, as he said with dignity: "I fail to understand, lord chancellor, your object in recalling to my mind the unpleasant memories I have striven to forget. Uncle of Winchester, thou didst send for me saying that matters

of the deepest import required my presence at thy conference. As yet, ye have not made your purpose known, and I'm weary of this strange delay."

"My lord," answered the bishop very quietly, "we desired your Grace should understand the reasons which have forced us to follow the path we are resolved to tread. In brief, the thing is this: The English people have become dissatisfied, and they are ripe for a bloody revolution. What we propose is to address your father, convince him that he is too ill to rule, and peacefully persuade him to resign. The crown shall then be placed upon your head and England will be spared another war."

The Prince was very pale, and his eyes flashed as he faced the anxious circle of noblemen. His voice trembled a little as he made his answer. "And did ye think I would agree to this? Ye do misjudge, my lords, if ye fear war. The Parliament which made my father king is faithful to him still. There is no danger of civil revolution. As for myself," his voice grew very stern, "ye have mistook if for one instant ye believed me a traitor. Zounds! my lords, what must ye think of me to dare propose it! Why, ye are mad!"

A babble of voices broke in upon him.—"The King's too ill to reign."—"He's lost all wisdom."—"Consider, if the Princess could be crowned."—"The King has broken his vows and forfeited all allegiance."—"He will not let you govern as you should."—"He is unjust."—"He suffers insults to

you."—"He listens to every evil word against you." —"Think of all that you have done for him—" "fighting"—"and ruling"—"and giving him your counsel." "He is ungrateful"—"cruel"—"unreasonable."—"You shall have justice if we die for it." —"Justice! Justice!" cried every voice in chorus.

Above the tumult the Prince's clear voice rang out. "Shame on ye, lords, that dare to prate of justice," he cried passionately. "I blush that I have listened to such words. Do I not owe the King a double duty, both as his son and as his humble subject? What have I done that I deserve his gratitude? Fought, say ye? Were not his wars my own, and must I not use my strength to keep mine heritage? Occupied high places in the government? Were not these great offices and powers my father's, to bestow as he judged fit? Was it not kindness, that he gave them to me? If he should ask to have them back again, is't not his unquestioned right?"

The nobles shrank from him as Henry's voice rose higher in fierce earnestness.

"What is't he's done that angers ye? He has looked coldly on me? True, yet would he not unless I had done wrong. He's suffered insults, say ye? Nay, but has rebuked those who, in their unreasoning love for me, would fain have made me what I'm not—his equal. What is there in this that lacks justice to me? If he has been more cold than I deserve, why, he is ill; when he is well again, which God grant soon, he then will show once more his

love for me. And, even if he had shown me injustice, do ye forget that I am his son? Am I not bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh? Am I not his own, to use as he desires? Verily, if he should slay me with his own hand, it would still be his right! Oh, think shame, my lords, that ye have dared propose this. If the crown come to me in such a way, God grant that it may never touch my head."

Winchester, by this time having regained his breath, tried to use fresh arguments, but the Prince would not listen to him.

"My lords, I will not hear another word of this. I have refused, and so the matter's ended. Ye are my friends, but remember, lords, if one of ye dare to do the slightest evil against my lord and father, ye shall feel the vengeance that the Prince of Wales pays to all enemies of the King of England."

So saying, with head uplifted and haughty step, the Prince departed from the chamber, leaving behind him the amazed conspirators. His heart was heavy, but it would have been heavier still could he have seen the Bishop of Winchester sink back in his great chair, and laugh aloud.

"Ah, what a gallant prince we have, my lords. Didst mark the angry fire in his eyes? Well, he shall be our king within the month. Upon what day shall we request an audience?"

CHAPTER XIII.

"Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?"

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

"NAY, Edmund, thou needst have no fears, I've pledged my word that she shall be thy bride, and 'twill go hard but I'll redeem that pledge!" Once again, the Prince had sought the earl's prison chamber to tell him of the progress of his wooing.

Lord March was, not unnaturally, much distressed on learning that Lady Anne had left the court, and still more so when he found she had been placed in a nunnery. Nor was he comforted by the knowledge that Scrope had been her suitor. " 'Tis not in reason that she will refuse acceptance of so excellent an offer; my lord, thou hast made me hope in vain."

"But, Edmund," the Prince protested, "she hath given me her promise that she will not wed until thou art free to woo her. Moreover, the baron marries Lady Joan Holland ere the moon has waned."

"But Lady Anne may still regret her promise and learn to love Lord Scrope."

"By Heaven," cried the Prince indignantly, "if

thou dost think so meanly of thy sweetheart, thou art not worthy of the lady's love."

Mortimer sprang to his feet, and crossing to his friend's side, said as pleadingly as a girl: "Forgive me, lord, it was my jealousy. Forget that I have ever dared to doubt her. Yet when Lord Scrope of Masham cannot win her, what hope is there for captive Mortimer?"

"There's every hope," came the hearty answer. "Why, Edmund, she could not choose but love thee. Nay, cheerily, now, for thou shalt soon be free." He hesitated, then added bravely,—"I do expect *my* wedding will presently occur. The final arrangements are now in progress, and I shall ask mine honored father to let thee join us at the great banquet. Mayhap the Lady Anne will be there also. Nay, Edmund," hastily, for a flash of joy came to the other's face, "thou must not hope too much. The King has been cold to me of late. Even on this occasion, he may not grant my wish, but I will use mine utmost power to bring thee happiness."

For some moments both were silent, thinking of the future; but while the earl's thoughts were happy ones, a cloud settled on Harry Monmouth's brow. It was no longer possible to forget his own fast approaching marriage, and to the Prince's mind this event meant nothing but misery. Amid the conflicting standards of that day, when those of noble blood and high position could be corrupt,

while the lower ranks must continue virtuous, the heir to England's throne had placed a high ideal before his eyes and followed it with simple, steadfast purpose. Marriage, to him, meant a complete union, ending only with death. He acknowledged to himself that he had learned to love the pictured face he carried in his bosom. This love he must root out, leaving him with a free, undivided heart to give his foreign bride. He did not dare to hope that he could love her, but he resolved to show her all respect, all honor, and all possible affection. Naught but his duty should keep him from her side; he would play his hard part so well, that the world would think he fairly worshipped her. In this high ideal of duty lay the reason he had opposed the many marriages suggested by the King, declaring that he wished to choose his bride without the aid of courtiers. But when Burgundy asked for England's succor, the Prince resolved to sacrifice himself, rather than lose the benefits of such an alliance. It was no small thing that he gave up—for from his earliest childhood he had craved pure, unselfish love; and now—he smiled in his sorrow, as he suddenly thought of the young Princess,—was she, too, longing for a love she could not have? Did she dread leaving her native land, and was she wondering what manner of man was to be her husband? Instantly there came an imaginary picture of her to his mind—fresh, and fair, with wide, childlike eyes, half-filled with terror of the coming

future, shrinking a little as she saw these strange great Englishmen, with their keen eyes upon her —greeting them with a timid dignity, and ever looking to her mother's face for courage and approval. "Poor child," the Prince murmured softly, and his heart filled with ready sympathy.

Mortimer raised his head. "Didst speak to me, my Prince?"

"Nay, Edmund, I was thinking of my little foreign bride. God comfort her if she also fears the future. I wonder if I can make her happy?"

"Thou wouldst make any maiden happy, dear my lord. 'Tis passing strange Anne Stafford loves thee not."

Harry laughed merrily, and shook his head at him. "Thou art a jealous, lovesick swain, my lord. The Lady Stafford did scarce look at me. I would thou couldst have seen her face that night when I did tell her that thou wert her lover. The crimson dyed her lily cheek and neck, her eyes fell shyly, then again sought mine, to read if I were speaking all the truth—"

"My lord, thou wilt make me mad," the earl cried. "Methinks I cannot live another day without a glimpse of my sweet Lady Anne."

"Thou must be patient, Mortimer," the Prince urged, smiling. "No great event can be accomplished in an hour. Thou wilt enjoy thy happiness so much the more, that thou hast waited for it. We must not risk approval of our course, if thou

art free to wed her in a month. But, Edmund, I have other plans for thee; if these do fail, thou needst not be anxious. We will not let the lady become a nun, even if I break mine honorable trust."

The earl was instantly eager and curious. "What dost thou mean? Ah, prithee, tell me, tell me. Nay, then, thou shalt not rise from yonder seat until thou hast explained these words of thine."

He sought to seize his friend, but the Prince eluded his grasp, and ran swiftly to the other side of the room. Mortimer pursued him, but Harry was wonderfully swift of movement and not easily caught. Here and there they ran, circling the heavy oaken table many times, and overturning whatever obstacles lay in their way. The earl, dishevelled and excited, was breathlessly denouncing his friend and begging for confidences in the same sentence, while the Prince, losing neither his calmness nor his perfect physical control, was running and dodging with an ease and grace of movement which caused a lively admiration in the panting earl's heart. This was by no means the first time they had tried each other's skill,—like all healthy young men, Harry dearly loved physical exertion, and excelled easily in the popular sports of the day. Now, all his gloomy thoughts were gone in an instant, and with flushed cheeks and laughing eyes, he threw his heart into the play. The merriment had reached its height when a heavy knock fell on

the oaken door. Neither of the young men heeded it. The earl was driving his guest into a corner, and felt that victory was sure. Again the knock, louder than before—the Prince had given a sudden turn and escaped to the centre again, the earl ran slowly after him, almost helpless with laughter. This time, a sword-hilt pounded on the door with a vehemence which made the rafters of the room tremble and ring with sound. The two runners came to a sudden stop, then Harry crossed and flung wide the door. Baron Scrope of Masham, wrapped in a riding cloak, stood upon the threshold. His eyes sought his prince's flushed and happy face, then with one swift, scornful glance swept the disordered room, and rested curiously upon the young earl, who leaned breathless against the wall.

"It pleases your Grace to spend your hours in merry pastime," observed the baron, with some disdain. He hated any lack of dignity, and guessed that Harry had been very free.

The Prince's flush deepened,—he was in no mood for scornful glances, even from a friend. "Wherefore are you here, my Lord of Scrope?" he asked with dignity.

"The council send by my hand letters of importance from Lord Arundel."

"Give them me," was the brief answer.

They were produced and Harry quickly glanced

at them, then broke the seal of a private missive, an anxious frown gathered on his brow. Here was news indeed! The Earl of March now came forward, and with courtesy invited the stranger to enter. Scrope would have accepted, for he was very curious as to who this man might be, but the Prince raised his head. "Nay, Edmund, we must not tax thy hospitality. My lord, descend and ask one for my horse. I'll be before you at the western gate."

Reluctantly the baron departed on his mission. The earl turned anxiously to his friend: "Must thou go, my lord? There is so much I fain would say to thee."

The Prince was silent for an instant, thinking, then roused himself with a sigh. "Edmund, take courage, all may yet be well. I'll send thee word if I have any news that doth affect thy interests. Farewell, I cannot promise when I'll come again."

"Thou art troubled, lord," said Mortimer, pleadingly. "Ah, stay one hour, and let me soothe thee as I used."

"Nay, tempt me not," Harry answered quickly, "affairs of state call me hence. I must to London to join my father's council, and then, perchance, to Dover or Calais. I cannot tell thee of the matter now, but methinks a fortnight will make all right again. Go within, Mortimer, and so farewell."

The Prince smiled brightly, pressed his friend's

hand, and closed the door upon him; then, as he hurried down the passage, he read once more Arundel's private letter:

. . . "Our soldiers are unpaid, and without comforts. . . . The Duke John increases every day in hauteur, and will not even listen to remonstrance. Instead of completing arrangements for your Grace's marriage, he avoids the subject, and refuses to name the date for our departure as escort for the Princess. . . . If matters are not mended presently, I must request your Grace to call me back to England—mine honor and my patience will not brook that I retain my post and see our country daily insulted in mine own person!" . . .

The Prince crumpled the paper in his hand, and groaned. "My hopes have failed. The alliance will be broken. My lord, the King, has proved that he was right—I am not fit to lead! I have done wrong and England is disgraced. Oh, God, give me thy help in this dark hour!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"If I am
Traduced by ignorant tongues, which neither know
My faculties nor person, yet will be
The chronicles of my doing, let me say
'Tis but the fate of place, and the rough brake
That virtue must go through."

HENRY VIII.

THE fifth day of January, in the year of our Lord fourteen hundred and twelve, dawned clear and beautiful. There was a crispness and sparkle in the air that made one long to be up and doing. The skies were blue and cloudless, the ground hard and smooth beneath the horses' hoofs. Down a white, winding road, came at a brisk pace a little body of men-at-arms, a score in number, mounted on strong, spirited steeds, their halberds glistening in the sunlight. At their head rode the slender, upright figure of their young commander, his handsome face glowing with health and spirits, his brilliant eyes noticing each detail of nature and of man, his ready smile often on his lips in answer to the jests of his faithful soldiers. Many natures are easily depressed, while others possess a buoyancy of spirit which nothing can destroy. Henry of Monmouth was rarely fortunate in that he belonged to this latter class. It was two weeks

since he had left London and journeyed to Dover. There he had received other letters from the Earl of Arundel, each making it still more evident that the alliance with Burgundy must cease. Had the King permitted, Henry would have gone in person to woo his bride, but failing his consent, he remained at Dover, using his utmost powers to prevent a rupture. Convinced at last that his labor was useless, he started on his return to London, determined to urge the prompt recall of the English troops. It was no easy task for the high-spirited young man to go before his father, as he intended, and say: "My policy has failed; and you were wisest in that you did oppose it." He could not perceive that time would vindicate *his* wisdom, and prove the greater failure of the archbishop's plans. He only knew that he had sought to make England a still greater nation, and he had not succeeded. And the marriage? That also was not to be. For an instant he had felt a thrill of joy at the thought, and taking the exquisite picture from his bosom he had kissed it passionately. But this relief was only for a moment—he knew he must promptly seek another bride, for every month that passed without his marriage only increased the annoyance of the King. To whatever proposition his father made, he was now bound in honor to consent.

These were bitter subjects for a young man's thoughts, and to the Prince they brought the keen-

est sorrow and anxiety. To his mental distress he had added severe bodily fatigue, for knowing that the council was to meet on this, the fifth day of the month, he had determined to reach London and report to it, and owing to delays at Dover, he had only stopped two hours for a night's rest. The soldiers with him, men of brawn and muscle, who had endured the privations of the Welsh campaigns, were yet much wearied by the hurried trip, and looked with wonder at the delicate young man who seemed as fresh and full of life and spirit as if he had just risen from a couch of down and started for a hunt.

As they rode over the worn Roman pavement of Watling Street and reached the outskirts of the city, Henry showed the greatest interest in his surroundings. Horses, grazing in the meadows, raised their heads to whinny at the passing strangers, herons and moor-hens rose from the brooks and marshes, and here and there a ploughman would cease his whistling, or a milkmaid her song, to gaze with wondering eyes after the little company. Presently they clattered over London Bridge, between the close-built houses, waiting a moment for a boat to pass and the drawbridge to swing back into place, and during the brief pause Henry's eyes had rested with evident abhorrence upon two human heads, weather-stained and pecked at by the birds, which the executioner had placed upon the central tower. His men, likewise,

observed them, but with absolute indifference—the sight was too familiar to cause even a comment.

After crossing the bridge, the party turned into the narrow, dirty, unpaved street of Upper Thames; they were nearing their journey's end, and rode more slowly, while the people thronged out of the shops and houses to raise cheer after cheer for "Prince Hal" and "Harry Monmouth." Every man, woman and child on Upper Thames and in Eastcheap knew and loved Henry personally, for he had often wandered on foot through these regions, mingling with the people freely, helping their needs, and using his utmost power to right their wrongs and guard them from injustice. Little wonder, then, that the men shouted, the women waved their hands from upper balconies and children crowded about the horses' feet. Henry received this admiration with modest pleasure, his lips were parted in a loving smile, and his eyes searched the multitude of faces and seemed to bestow an answering greeting on each one. Since he had first appeared in London as the Prince, at the early age of twelve, his popularity among the masses had never waned, but on the contrary, had increased and deepened year by year, until now he was loved far better than the King.

As they rode on, passing with difficulty through the crowded street, the outlines of a handsome stone mansion rose before them. It stood upon the

bank of the Thames, west of the Swan Stairs, with the water lapping the massive walls which rose four stories in height, pierced by innumerable latticed windows. The long extent of roof was broken by pointed gables, five on each side, giving a quaint and homelike effect rarely seen in London residences, which too often suggested fortresses. This mansion, built by Sir John Poultney, four times Mayor of London, and once possessed by John Holland, Duke of Exeter, had, upon his execution for treason, reverted to the crown and been granted by Henry IV. to his eldest son. It was a pleasant sight to many wearied eyes, and a grizzled captain exclaimed with a sigh of relief,—"Look! There is Cold Harbor at last. By St. Anne, methought the Lollards had burned it to the ground, we were so long without a glimpse of 't."

The Prince answered gaily over his shoulder,—"The way is always longest when we think 'tis ended. Is not thy chief desire, Grafton, for a cup of sack?"

The man laughed heartily. "Ay, captain, thou hast hit me there; i' faith, the journey's made me very thirsty."

"We'll open another cask of the red Gascony wine my father gave me," answered the Prince. "Ye've earned both rest and favor, men, and I am pleased with all that ye have done."

What praise is sweeter to a soldier's ear than the

commendation of his general? The guardsmen flushed with happiness and felt repaid for all the hardships they had undergone.

They rode between the massive gates into the courtyard, and instantly all was confusion, as servants poured out to greet their master, some leading away the horses, others shouting to their newly returned companions, while a few hurried within doors to prepare a meal for the hungry travellers.

Henry did not dismount, but called an esquire to him. "Where meets the council, boy? Is it within?"

"Nay, my lord, it meets to-day at Westminster," answered the lad, and would have added more, but Henry abruptly wheeled his horse.

Several who had accompanied him on the journey prepared to mount again, but the Prince stopped them. "Nay, ye have ridden far, and are much wearied. I will not keep ye from needed rest and food."

"My lord," said an esquire, "if you will have patience for but an instant, we'll send for horses and accompany your Grace."

Henry shook his head. "The hour is late—I must away at once." And in a moment he had passed the gates, and ridden forth alone.

The street was almost deserted now, and the Prince spurred his horse past the crowded hovels of Upper Thames, then on by the Monastery of the

Black Friars, the gloomy walls of the Fleet, and the stately Temple; finally he entered that long, straggling highway known as the Strand, and lined with the mansions of the nobility and of the high dignitaries of the Church. The magnificence of their architecture was in sharp contrast to the wretched buildings crowding the narrow streets within the walls, and Henry sighed a little, for he would gladly have done away with poverty. Guiding his horse with care, since the street was unpaved and full of pits and sloughs, he passed the palaces with speed, frowned slightly as York Place came in view and he thought of the old traitor, Archbishop Scrope, then reached at last the palace of Westminster, the chief residence of his royal father. Although both the Tower and the Savoy were used by him at times, Westminster was the favorite, for its situation on the Thames, surrounded by gardens and meadow lands, far out from the throbbing city's heart, gave peace and rest to the wearied King.

The Prince had felt no surprise that the council was meeting here instead of at Cold Harbor, as was its wont. "They thought I would not have returned to-day," he reasoned. Riding through the gates, and across the drawbridge, lowered at his call, he dismounted and gave his horse into a groom's charge, saying, as he patted the velvet head: "He's borne me far to-day, and is much wearied. Look to it that he has ample food and rest. I shall not need him for many hours to

come." Then running lightly up the steps, Henry laid his hand upon the door, but it was promptly opened from within, and two knights of the court appeared upon the threshold. They were not members of Archbishop Arundel's party; but, seeing the Prince, they started, hesitated, then coming forward passed him with averted heads. The young man bit his lip, but said no word, and quickly entering the palace, strode down the long passages leading to the Council Chamber. Before the door, he stopped in some surprise;—surely the guard was doubled, and it was not usual to see the captain's sword unsheathed,—but so slight a matter was instantly forgotten as he recognized the officer, and greeted him with a flashing smile:—

"Ah, Derrbury, art thou on guard to-day? 'Tis many weeks since I did see thee last. Hast thou recovered from that wasting fever?"

In much embarrassment, the captain stammered: "I thank your Grace, I am quite well again."

Henry looked amazed at his confusion, but continued merrily in a lower tone: "Has Mistress Alice consented to be won as yet? Ah, sir, thy blushes betray thee. I have heard many tales of this." Then he added carelessly: "It groweth late. Have the lords been long in presence?"

"About an hour, my lord," faltered the officer.

The Prince stepped forward to the door, then fell back in amazement, as the guards crossed their halberds before him, and exclaimed,—"How, sir-

rahs, what means this outrage? Know ye what ye do?"

The captain stepped quickly forward. "Your Grace's pardon, but you may not enter."

"What, *I* may not enter? I, the Prince? Derrbury, thou art mad!"

The officer was very pale and his eyes were troubled, for he dearly loved his Prince. "Is it possible, my lord, you do not understand? You have not heard? Nay, then, 'tis not for me to tell you. But it is my command your Grace shall not pass through yonder door."

"By Heaven! sir," cried the Prince hotly, "dost think to play with me? Fellows, stand aside, or I will slay ye with mine own hand."

He drew his sword and advanced upon them. The guards hesitated, yet stood their ground; but ere he could strike a blow, the youthful captain had sprung upon him from behind, and with a sudden movement dashed the sword from his hand. Then standing before the door, his own steel uplifted, he cried: "Back, my lord, back, and do yourself no harm! You shall not enter save over my dead body, for if you do, my head must answer for it. Know, furthermore, that if your Grace persists, I am commanded to arrest you and take you to the Tower. So says my lord, the King."

The amazed Prince had picked up his fallen sword and started to attack him, but as the officer proceeded, his arm fell by his side, and he stood

in silence, white to the lips. Then, with an effort, he asked steadily: "Upon what charge wouldst thou arrest me, captain?"

And Derrbury answered gravely: "That of high treason to my lord, the King."

Henry staggered, as if from a physical blow; his sword rang on the floor, and he buried his face in his hands.

With tearful eyes, the captain came swiftly forward and knelt before his Prince. "My lord, forgive me that I must do my duty against you. I love you, and I know that you are innocent. Would to God another held this place."

Henry raised his head—he was himself again. Extending his hand to the kneeling officer, who kissed it fervently, he answered: "While thou livest, Derrbury, I know that I have one true friend. Nor do I trust thee less because thine honor and thy duty to my father compel thee to proceed against my person. But do not grieve for me, for 'twill soon pass. The King has listened to some idle tale from one who seeks to do me injury. He'll surely let me prove mine innocence. Dost thou conduct me to the Tower at once, or may I have some speech with friends before I enter the dark gate?"

"Nay," answered the captain hastily, "your Grace is not my prisoner. The King's commands were, if you did persist on entering the Council Chamber, we should take you captive. You have not done

so, therefore, you are free to go wherever you desire,—only you must make no attempt to see the King."

The Prince breathed a short sigh of relief. "His Highness is very kind in this, but I have come with matters of importance that I must place before his honored council. Is it permitted that I write to him?"

"No, my lord," answered the captain firmly.

Henry was puzzled. What harm lay in a letter? He thought a moment, then asked, "Cannot some member of the council speak with me here?"

The captain hesitated. "I do not know, my lord; I will propose it."

He gave a short command to a guard, who entered. The Prince leaned wearily against a window ledge, and patiently awaited his return. In a moment the door was thrown open and sharply closed behind two persons, the soldier and a young man of handsome face and figure, richly dressed, at sight of whom Henry sprang forward, crying: "My brother Thomas! Ah, thank God that thou hast come to me. What have I done that I am banished from our father's side?"

"My lord," answered Thomas of Clarence hastily, "the council waits. I cannot stay to question. What is the message thou wouldst send by me?"

The Prince drew from his doublet several letters, saying humbly: "I have been in constant correspondence with Lord Arundel. Tell the council

that I am convinced my policy was not the part of wisdom. The alliance with Burgundy must end at once. I beg them to recall our troops without delay."

Lord Thomas answered coldly: "Measures have already been taken to this effect, and the King has graciously received ambassadors from the Count of Armagnac requesting our assistance."

Henry started. This was a change indeed. He made no comment, but held out the letters. "Give these to my lord, the King, and beg him to examine them with care."

Clarence drew back. "I cannot take them, lord."

"How now," the Prince cried in astonishment, "there is some mystery here,—I prithee tell me why am I not permitted to send these, or even a letter of mine own, unto my lord, the King? Nay, brother, never turn thy face away, but expound to me the meaning of this wonder."

"Hast never heard," Thomas faltered, "that poison can be carried in a letter as easily as in food?"

"Poison! I' faith, I am still ignorant."

The younger prince dared not meet his brother's eyes, but answered in low tones: "When one is proved a traitor, and desires a throne, if fair means fail him, will he not use foul?"

One instant Harry Monmouth stood silent, horrified; then he cried sternly—"As God lives, I am innocent, Clarence! If I have ever sought to

rob our father, yea even of his very smallest honor, may Heaven keep me from the throne of England! Who are my enemies that dare to utter so base a lie as this?"

"No enemies, my lord, but thy dear friends," Clarence answered sadly.

A sudden thought came to the puzzled Prince. "Tell me, brother, who are the lords within yon Council Chamber?"

"Archbishop Arundel is the chancellor; myself am president; others, Gascoigne, Sir John Stanley, our cousin Neville, and my lord of Warwick. The Baron Scrope remaineth treasurer."

Henry understood, and groaned.

Thomas faced him quickly. "Knowest thou now, my lord, what has been done?"

"Ay, I do know all."

The young Prince shrank back in sorrow and dismay. "Oh, my lord, and thou didst swear to me thine innocence. How couldst thou have sinned so deeply against our father? Ah, Harry, Harry, God forgive thee and keep thee from the blacker sin of—death."

Henry was silent for a moment, then answered simply: "Thomas, mine uncle, and the other lords, did tell me, with a dozen feeble reasons, that 'twas their purpose to go before my father and ask him to resign the crown to me. I answered plainly I'd have none of it; and being certain the affair was ended, I did quite forget the matter. I do suppose

they disregarded my desire and did as they had purposed; but for myself, I never gave consent, nor would I have worn the crown if they had won it."

"My lord," said Thomas, "would they have sought to make thee King against thy will? Shall we believe thy words and doubt their actions?"

"Then thou dost think I am a traitor, Clarence, and that I've added to that sin these lies? Believe it, if thou wilt. 'Twill but increase the punishment that I must bear. Go, brother, and take my humble duty to our father. Tell him that I will in all things obey him, and look to Heaven to prove that I am guiltless. I do suppose we may not meet again, therefore, farewell; God have thee in his keeping."

With a heavy heart the Prince turned away, but Clarence, running forward, fell on one knee and kissed his hand, crying: "Thou art no traitor, Harry, but a true prince. I would believe thy word against a thousand, and I will tell the King that thou art innocent."

Henry smiled sadly into his brother's earnest, loving eyes, and answered: "Nay, speak no word in favor of me, or they will say thou art a traitor too. I am content that thou believest me. 'Tis well thou hast my seat in council, Thomas, and God grant thee greater wisdom than was mine. Farewell, my brother, think of me with kindness when men do charge me with such villainy."

When Thomas entered the Council Chamber, he bore the letters from Arundel, and when the Baron

Scrope exclaimed: "Is't possible your Grace was so imprudent as to accept these letters from the —traitor?—" the young Prince turned upon him haughtily, and answered in a tone they long remembered,—"My lord of Masham, these are from *my* hand, and I would die a hundred deaths before I would suspect the Prince of Wales of such a crime as that!"

CHAPTER XV.

"To say the truth, so Judas kissed his Master;
And cried—all hail! whereas he meant—all harm."

HENRY VI.

"Of two evils I have chose the least."

PRIOR—IMITATION OF HORACE.

How difficult it is to satisfy a man set on revenge! His longings are, at first, moderate; but when he has achieved one step he must on, nor will he be content until he's brought his enemy to the depths of disgrace and shame.

The Baron Scrope of Masham had at first resolved to ruin Lady Anne of Stafford, and but for the King's stern interference would have succeeded. He had, at least, driven her from the court, and had roused many voices against her. Then he turned his thoughts upon his friend, the Prince. Already the Queen's jealousy had given tongue to many whispered scandals, and these were kept alive by Lady Margaret, Clarence's wife, and her sister, the new-made Lady Scrope—her wedding had occurred at Christmas time, during the Prince's enforced absence at Dover. The baron soon learned that his lady shared his own concealed hatred of the Prince. Both she and Margaret had chosen to consider themselves slighted because Harry showed greater attention to Lady Stafford than to their noble selves.

It was, therefore, an easy task to keep the fires of envy and of malice burning fiercely. Scrope did not even let them know of his changed feelings, and defended the Prince whenever they spoke against him, yet he invented numerous causes for bitterness. He showed a sense of grieved injury at Harry's absence on the occasion of his marriage, disregarding the fact that he had chiefly urged the Prince's departure. He also told Joan, with much reluctance, that he had been slighted in presence of a stranger, and gave her most remarkable accounts of Harry's conduct in Lord March's apartments—matters which she delighted in discussing with "her dear friend and namesake," the Queen of England.

But all this was mere play to the resourceful baron. His other labors were more worthy of his genius. On learning of Bishop Beaufort's plans, he had impressed upon the conspirators the necessity of convincing the King that they had yielded to the Prince's entreaties. Then, before the appointed day for action, he had gone privily to the King and betrayed their purposes, saying that the Prince had formed the plot himself, and that he, the baron, had consented only that he might learn the worst and warn his monarch.

The furious King rallied all his strength, and when the nobles appeared before him he answered all their arguments with a firm courage and strength of indignation that amazed them. Lord Scrope was absent, on a plea of sickness, and Bolingbroke did

not betray his knowledge, but listened with apparent astonishment, increasing to anger, and ending in the sentence of banishment from both council and court. But Scrope remained lord treasurer! None of them considered this as strange—the baron was not with them, so why should the King suspect him more than Gascoigne, who was still chief justice? They took their punishment without complaint, and, being from the court, they never dreamed of the opinion which was quickly formed against the Prince. They had done no violence, nor were they feared. They'd asked for the King's resignation, he had refused and banished them from his person; there was no calumny. What reason, then, was there for treating the Prince differently? They supposed that he would be dismissed from the council—they never knew that every member of that brilliant court had heard within a week that Harry Monmouth had sought his father's life, and was now plotting, with poisonous drugs and witchcraft—yea, even with his sword, to slay the King. It was said, his Highness's epileptic fits, which had much increased of late, were due to the evil eye of a London witch, a boon companion of the Prince of Wales. But such tales were too vague and shadowy—there must be others of more character!

The baron, skilfully playing his double part, now made a secret journey to Cold Harbor. His intent was to see "his friend," under the guise of risking

much for love, and while he held a proud place in the King's regard, yet keep the devoted friendship of the Prince.

Harry received him with much graciousness. In his own heart his love had somewhat cooled. He had thought the baron's marriage rather hasty, since he had been so lately in love with Anne, and he had been offended when Scrope had shown his scorn before the Earl of March. Yet he had never doubted him, and to-day he was especially cordial in his greetings.

The baron had carefully prepared an explanation of his remaining treasurer, but he was given no chance to use it.

"My lord of Masham, thou art very welcome, and I have special cause to commend thy friendship. I hear thou art still lord treasurer."

"Ay, my lord, your Grace must understand—"

"I understand the matter perfectly," Harry interrupted. "Am I not right in thinking thou wert absent when mine uncle Winchester appeared before the King?"

"I was indeed absent," began Scrope reluctantly, —but the Prince added promptly,—

"Then thou alone, amongst all these my friends, didst have sufficient love for me to obey my desires and forget thine own. Thou alone hast not stamped me as a traitor to my sovereign lord. Baron, I thank thee. Thou art a true friend."

Villain though he was, a faint blush dyed the nobleman's cheeks at this, and for an instant he was confused. But presently he answered humbly: "I am rejoiced, my Prince, if thou art pleased. I had feared thou mightst misjudge me; but upon mine honor, my dearest wish is to serve your lordship."

"And, my lord," Harry answered, smiling, "he serves me best who doth perform my will. Thou only, Scrope, among that little band whom I last met within the bishop's palace—thou only, hast been admitted to my presence. I sent mine uncle word, when he came begging to speak with me, that he had caused *his* sufferings and *mine,* and until I had subduced mine anger against him, it was not wisdom that we two should meet. But thou, my lord, art always very welcome."

Scrope answered proudly: "And I shall often claim that welcome, Prince, although I risk my head to come to thee."

Harry looked up, surprised. "What meanest thou?"

"Nay," answered the baron, "I was unwise to speak, but since 'tis done, I must fain make the meaning clear. I grieve to tell your Grace the court doth judge thee as one who seeks to rob the King of life. Mine humble protests are of no avail" (he had protested warmly—he played his double part continually and with the utmost skill); "and men do think thou art so wrapped in sin, that were it known that I had been with thee, I fear the King

would take his trust away. Yet did he slay me, I'd still visit thee."

He had protested his love a bit too much; the words did not ring quite true, and the Prince felt it; yet he would not allow himself one doubtful thought.

"Nay, baron, I must forbid this foolish risk. Thy life and services as treasurer are far too precious to toss into a scale and be outweighed by the pleasure of our meeting. Come not again, therefore, till I can prove that I am innocent of all these charges, and we can freely meet once more at court."

The baron was far from pleased at this—it was part of his purpose to run a little risk, and so to prove his friendship to the Prince, but he reflected it might be as well if he yielded once more his wishes to his lord's, and stayed away in safety.

The Prince's next words turned his thoughts into a different channel.

"Pray tell me of my sovereign lord and father. Is he at present well?"

Scrope's face grew sad. "I grieve to tell thee, lord, the King is worse. These falsehoods breathed about thee much distress him, and seem to give strength to his disease."

Harry sighed deeply. "Thou dost make me sad; my lord, use thy good offices to win me favor. If only I might have speech with him, I could convince him that I am much wronged."

"I'll try what I can do, my lord, but yet I fear

there's small chance of success. Thou knowest I must not presume upon his favor—since I am thy friend."

"Thou art right, baron, I had forgot the peril. 'Tis best thou shouldst not even speak my name."

And in his heart the lord of Scrope was thinking—" 'Twill be my care thou dost not see the King. I know that thou couldst gain his trust and love—even to me thy charm is dangerous."

It was, in fact, so dangerous that the nobleman abruptly rose and said farewell, for Harry's silvery voice recalled the days when they had sung together on the Thames; and Harry's winning smile brought back those months when they were fighting side by side in battle, when the Prince's courage and sweet cheerfulness had stirred a genuine admiration in his heart. And then there followed the busy years in London, and as the Prince rose higher in power and rank, he'd always given a high place to his friend.

The baron did not analyze the causes which had changed his shallow love to fiercest hate, but as he increased in greatness and saw himself unloved, and knew that he owed every blessing to his Prince, he first felt jealous of Harry's popularity, and then his pride rebelled at the thought of how entirely he was at the mercy of his benefactor. Should the Prince turn against him, he would sink to the oblivion from which he came. True, his blood was noble, but there were many nobler still, and he thought bitterly that there was nothing in himself to lean upon. The

Prince alone had kept him at the head. Then came the foolish jealousy of Lady Anne of Stafford. In itself this had been nothing; but the fact that she would lightly throw aside himself as husband for a few smiles given by the Prince—this was the spark that lighted the long-hidden train of hatred. In that instant when he overheard her words, he had resolved to prove that though the Prince were ruined, he would still be great. The fates that rule all destinies had taken his part. Surely they would not desert him now when victory was so near. Many were the things to be accomplished before the final triumph—he must be calm and make each play with care; if he should falter all might yet be lost. Sternly he crushed the last faint protest of his heart and conscience. If the Prince's presence weakened his resolution, he was resolved he must not see the Prince. Harry had given him an excellent reason—had, indeed, forbidden him to come again. So, the matter was settled; and now, onward,—it was his play, and every card a trump!

Meanwhile, Harry himself was pursuing a course which gave excellent assistance to the baron. The Prince had felt keenly the general distrust of him. Frank and loving as was his nature, the coldness shown him by certain of the court had tried him sorely. Although circumstances had prevented the deep affection naturally given by a son to his father, he had respected the King and shown him all obedience. He had constantly excused, not only to

others, but to himself, the King's peevish temper and ingratitude, and he had labored diligently to win his affection and trust. The thought that his father could believe him a traitor who, longing for his throne, would seek his life, was intolerable.

In sorrow, and almost in despair, the Prince, upon that fatal fifth of January, had returned to Cold Harbor, and, seeking his own chamber, had firmly bolted the door. Already physically exhausted from his long journey, and faint for lack of food, he sank upon his couch and abandoned himself to the keenest mental suffering. For hours the tumult raged within his breast;—he, the Prince, his monarch's eldest son, to be turned from the court in such disgrace; to be denied all intercourse with the King, and to be feared as a base murderer. "God, thou alone canst help me; have pity on me," was his cry. And yet he could not still his heart for prayer, but lay with clinched hands and fierce-bitten lips, fighting against the cruelty of fate. How could he ever prove his innocence? The stab had been given by his dearest friends. Who would believe him if he freely said that he had refused consent to Winchester's proposal? And even if men did believe the fact, he could not make them understand his motive. He must allow himself to be judged guilty. And of what? A simple conspiracy to dethrone his king? Nay, more, far more than this;—he was a son, veiling beneath his feigned obedience a crafty longing for his father's death. This was what men believed.

This what the King supposed to be the truth! And now what manner of life was left to him? He had been banished from the Council Chamber. He was to have no part in the government. The thought, startling in its evil meaning, brought him in agony to his feet. No part, no share in anything pertaining to this land? He, the heir apparent, to be kept in ignorance of weighty measures and great policies? Must he abandon Calais and the Cinque Ports to strangers who would rule for gain, and never journey in person to these towns? Men who would allow their stewards power to tax the people, and deny them justice? Harry knelt before his couch and buried his face in his arms. Oh, his poor cities, which he loved so dearly! But for himself—how should he spend the time if robbed of that employment which was almost life unto his active spirit? Must he be content to gossip at the court? He raised his head, dismayed,—even this poor, narrow door to happiness was closed, and he must not even ask for entrance. A fierce longing filled his veins with fire,—to have the love, the constant fellowship of that pure maid whose image painted on the piece of parchment was now engraven on his very heart. To linger by her side and gaze into those deeply earnest eyes—would she not wipe away his bitter tears? To feel her delicate hand tremble in his; to see that small, sweet mouth smiling with joy because they were together with their love! And then to press her close and kiss those lips—oh, was he mad,

to brood upon this folly? What place had such dreams in the breast of one who stood before the world a miserable traitor? Only a man of pure and noble heart must dare even to think upon her virtues. He was unworthy of even this scant comfort. What, then, remained to him?—a gloomy, useless and impatient life within the prison walls of a monastery,—a life upon which his active spirit looked with loathing, or—

There sounded a heavy knocking at the door and well-remembered voices calling him:—"My Lord Prince,"—"Hal, art thou within?" "Ho there, my lord! What, art dead?" "Hal! Madcap boy, wilt thou not ope the door?"

For an instant the Prince stood undecided. Should it be the monastery, or this? Should he confine himself within four walls, or live a free life with these merry friends? The knocks increased and made the great door tremble. The voices rose and fell, and rose again; then Harry swiftly crossed the room and called a merry greeting as he went. The die was cast, and he had chosen this!

CHAPTER XVI.

"Oh, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!"
MERCHANT OF VENICE.

A MONTH had passed since Scrope's visit to Cold Harbor, and lying tongues had blackened the Prince's name until that great class of the English nation, the townsmen, the merchants and the laborers—those who were in future centuries to rise up mightily and govern England—until these men began to shake their heads and think that it was possible they had misjudged their hero, and that he was indeed a brave and brilliant soldier, but yet a weak, ungoverned, faulty man.

This belief was a cruel disappointment to the nation. They had long ceased to love their present King, and had waited anxiously for the time to come when Harry of Monmouth should sit upon the throne. They had thought that every virtue was possessed by him, and had been filled with delight at the knowledge of his approaching marriage. But now,—the wedding would not take place, the alliance with Burgundy (the Prince's desire) had failed,—and then it was known that he had left the council. The reason for this was unexplained, but gossip said the Prince preferred to pass his time in idle pleasure. Then came the vague rumors that

Harry had sought to take his father's life—the greater number claimed the King's wine had been poisoned, others whispered the Prince had drawn his sword and had only been prevented from his purpose by courtiers who had wrenched the weapon from him! Men met in taverns and discussed the situation with gloomy brows. The Prince, it was known, had left the court—none guessed it was by the King's command—he was said to have refused to see the Bishop of Winchester and other lords, and the only explanation seemed to be that he had resolved to cast off all his old friends and abandon himself entirely to dissipation. And now it was said that he was leading such a life that men must blush even to speak his name.

The Prince, meanwhile, neither knew nor cared what men thought of his conduct. Shut out from all his regular employment, forbidden the court, and having there no friends who ventured to come to him and comfort his distress, he felt that to have denied himself all pleasure would have been useless and unnatural. Many of his hours were spent in reading eagerly what books he could procure; others were devoted to long rides and outdoor sports;—what harm if he spent a few of them in drinking and making merry with those London men who were devoted to him? He never guessed that when he dined in Eastcheap, and when, at times, those who were with him made too free with the red wine, that rumor made of him a constant drunkard; that when

his friends engaged in a not infrequent contest with the watch, he himself, though far away at rest, was called a brawler, and breaker of the law; and when once several of them, hot with wine, had masked themselves, and taken from some travellers the wherewithal to dine for a few days, and on the next morning, the Prince, learning of it, had gone before a justice and out of his own slender purse paid back the full sum to the sufferers—on this occasion rumor had declared that the Prince of Wales had turned highwayman and spent his nights in robbing all who passed!

England felt keenly the disgrace of it, and it was not long ere other nations learned of these proceedings, and smiled in joy;—let the King die and this wild Prince be crowned, then France need have no fear of her great rival, for England would be ruled by madmen.

If Harry had not been regarded as a traitor, those nobles who loved him well—Westmoreland, Warwick, Lord Cobden, and Courtenay, the Chancellor of Oxford—these would have gone to him and freely told him how the people grieved over his conduct and implored him to give up his evil life. But they dared not attempt to see him, fearing the King would have judged them disloyal to his person.

No one felt more keen sorrow over the Prince's misdeeds than did his father. Bolingbroke had, indeed, seen little of his son, save in the Council Chamber. Their natures were too utterly unlike to allow

either cordial sympathy or deep affection to exist between them, but even when most jealous of his successes the King had been proud of him, and now his pride was turned to bitter shame. He longed to send for the Prince, give him a fatherly reproof and urge him to mend his ways before it was too late, but he had been forced to believe that such a proceeding would be in the highest degree dangerous to his person. And now the climax of his sorrows seemed at hand, for Lord Scrope, the treasurer, arose in the Council Chamber and asked with much reluctance whether any one present had received notices of the receipt of moneys from the garrison of Calais. He regretted extremely the necessity of making this matter public, his personal love for the Prince was known to all, but since he had accepted his high position from the King, his duty and his honor forced him to speak plainly. He had intrusted to the Prince of Wales, some three months since, a large amount of money for the payment of the garrison at Calais. He had no assurances in his possession that this payment had been made (which was quite true, for he had destroyed the papers) and rumors had reached him that the Prince had retained the funds for his own uses. "Of course, such statements are entirely false," Scrope added in haste, "the Prince's honor is above dispute." He hoped that the lords might be able to enlighten him, for it was infamous that such charges should be unanswered.

The gloom had deepened upon the King's brow as he saw the doubt expressed in many faces. Clarence, flushing with anger, exclaimed in scorn: "I' faith, but every tongue is ready to add some shame unto my brother's burden, but I did never think to hear proclaimed a charge so lacking in all likelihood."

"Your Grace is right," answered the baron promptly, "such rumors are the very height of folly, and for that reason they must cease at once. There be men who gladly seize each chance to poison every mind against the Prince, but for ourselves, who know his Grace, denial is needless."

"Speak for thyself, lord baron," answered Archbishop Arundel, "methinks my knowledge of the Prince is excellent; and to me the thought that he has taken these public moneys comes charged with truth. Is't not a reasonable thing that one who spends his nights and days engaged in drinking and brawling, who even scruples not to seize by force the property belonging to all those who pass—is't not reasonable, I say, that such a man, possessing public funds, should freely use them for his purposes? Belike thou'lt find this money, Scrope, within the taverns—there to pay for sack which Harry Monmouth has furnished to his friends."

"Thy judgment is severe, my lord archbishop," came the calm voice of the Earl of Warwick. "The charges thou dost bring against the Prince are founded only on the London gossip. Because we

know he sometimes dines in Eastcheap, accompanied by Sir John Falstaff, Bardolph, Poins, and other men, more merry than virtuous, this is no proof that he has become a drunkard, or that he does delight to break the law. The charge of theft against him is monstrous! Methinks that did we know the truth of it, we would be shamed for crediting such falsehoods."

"I thank thee, Beauchamp, for those gentle words," said King Henry, sighing. "They are spoke, we know, to ease the sorrows of a father's heart. But we may not disguise beneath kind words the bitter deeds that wound our pride and love. When one becomes a traitor, other faults are but attendants on that greater sin. Since we do know that Harry would gladly take our life to gain the crown, why should we doubt that he would rob the state?"

The youthful Thomas of Clarence arose and approached his father, saying, "My liege, prithee, hear me. I do know that the Prince, my brother, is innocent and wronged. He never sought the crown, much less thy life. My uncle Winchester, for his own purposes, chose to demand thy resignation, and when thou didst refuse, he laid the blame upon his absent nephew. This is the truth."

The King glanced at his son doubtfully, then met Lord Scrope's gaze and remembered the baron's betrayal of the conspiracy. "Thomas," he answered, "thou dost love thy brother, and willingly wouldst

believe him innocent. But we do know that he is guilty of treason against us, for we have proofs of it thou knowest not."

Clarence paled a little. "Proofs, my lord? Dost thou then condemn him utterly?"

Before the King could answer, Westmoreland said: "My liege, were it not justice that we heard the matter? As yet, I do believe him innocent. If you have certain knowledge of his guilt, methinks you should not conceal it. Perchance the Parliament would then consent to proclaim the Prince Thomas England's heir. We cannot have a traitor on our throne."

Clarence raised his voice in protest: "While Harry lives, I will not take his place. He is the prince, and he shall be the king."

But the council did not heed him. Every eye was fixed upon the monarch. Henry paused an instant, and to Lord Scrope it seemed eternity ere he answered calmly:

"Cousin Neville, the evidence I hold cannot with wisdom be published to the world. Therefore, content ye that I'm satisfied my son is guilty of the charge against him; but for the nonce, 'twould not be wisdom, in our opinion, that Harry should be punished publicly. When foreign courts have greater cause to regard us with alarm, we can then banish him our shores; but until then these matters must be secret and he remain the prince in name, though stripped of all his power. Should he and his

adherents join with Burgundy against our state, we should have cause to fear him. Therefore, lord baron, you need not press your charge."

Scrope smiled a little—fate was with him still, for the King's words had a marked effect—Arundel openly approved his monarch's wisdom, while Warwick and Westmoreland sat with gloomy brows, and even Clarence felt an instant's doubt of his brother's innocence. Gascoigne was convinced of Harry's guilt, and Sir John Stanley had never doubted it. What wonder, then, if within a day all London knew that the Prince was charged with using for his pleasure public moneys, and fully half of London believed it to be the truth?

Harry himself learned of it while supping at a London tavern. The jolly Falstaff had heard it in the streets, and greeted his friend with joyful impudence: "Now what is this I hear about thee, Hal? Hast turned a robber on thine own account? And yet thou wouldst not join with us for a frolic. Shame on thee for a saintly hypocrite!"

"What meanest thou, Jack? What is it thou hast heard?" demanded the Prince, expecting to listen to some jest.

"Nay, but thy sin has found thee out at last, and all the court is whispering the question—what has become of the moneys for Calais?"

Harry started. "I do not understand."

Falstaff laughed loudly, and his companions joined him. "Why, thou mad wag, dost think to hide

behind thine innocence? Nay, 'twill not serve thee here, I promise thee. The lords in council are greatly distressed and thy father weeps in shame for thee. They have certain knowledge from Calais that thou hast not paid the garrison, but keepest the money for thine own pleasure. Come, Hal, an' thou wouldst not be called a false, ungrateful friend, I prithee, share the plunder with us. I'm hard pressed for a few English crowns."

The Prince flushed angrily, and turning to Poins, demanded almost fiercely: "Ned, what is there of truth within this lie?"

"By our Lady, Hal, but Falstaff is in earnest. This saying has spread abroad through London, and the chief justice is for punishing thee, but the King will not permit the charge. Natheless, they all believe thee guilty."

Harry raised his head proudly and answered: "I gave the garrison their pay some three months since, and 'twas acknowledged with due formality. No money has been given me of late, whether for Calais or any other purpose. Until the matter is plainly laid before me, I shall make no attempt to prove my cause. Jack, Ned, and the rest of ye, I'll hear no more of this. Come, sit ye down, and speak of other matters."

But although Harry was firm in his determination not to justify himself, scorning to notice these rumors and falsehoods, the charges against him were promptly proved to be mere lies. It happened

that soldiers of the garrison at Calais had come to London bearing important letters and the news that Earl Arundel and his forces would shortly sail for England. These men, being questioned about the truth of the charges against the Prince, waxed very angry, denied them utterly, and presently appeared before the council and formally swore they had received all payments.

So ended another play of Baron Scrope's, to his apparent joy but secret displeasure; yet the mischief had, after all, been done. Men's minds were poisoned with suspicion of Harry Monmouth, and they remembered the charge, while they forgot its falseness. Scrope, seeing the result, smiled a little, and murmured to himself—"The time is very near when I can strike—a little patience, and the end will come. Oh, how I long to raise my voice and cry,—'The Prince is dead. Long live the Prince of Wales!' "

CHAPTER XVII.

"Sound the trumpet!
No true knight is a tarrier."
ROBERT BROWNING.

JULY had come once more, that charming month of flowers and sunshine, of glorious days, and cool, perfect evenings, which make the summer such a happy season for all who crave a life in the open air. London was well-nigh deserted by those who had made it gay in winter time. The King, moving restlessly over the country, was living for a time at Greenwich Manor, and thither the greater number of the court had gone. Other nobles had retired to their distant castles; the citizens mourned their loss, for the extensive trains of the earls and bishops, their extravagant dress and mode of living, and the gaieties they devised, kept the city in a constant state of wonder and delight.

And now, London would have despaired save for Harry Monmouth, who had unexpectedly appeared and settled at Cold Harbor as if it were his intention to remain. He had spent the spring roaming from one royal palace to another, avoiding the King and travelling very simply. He had remained at Windsor for a time, hunting and seeking comfort and advice from Mortimer, and now he

had returned to that mansion which more than any other he called his home. He was welcomed joyfully by Falstaff and his friends, but to-night other men were his companions. The great hall was arranged for a feast, and the blackened rafters rang with merriment; soldier and servant crowded one another at the lower boards, while on the dais sat the Prince himself, upon his right and left two noblemen, one having the rugged appearance of a soldier—both of whom shared Harry's own disgrace of exile from the court. Below them were their chief attendants and the officers of the Prince's household.

It had been a right merry evening, the bowl circling freely, and the tables laden with abundance—for Cold Harbor was noted for its royal entertainments; but Harry wearied of it early, and while the fun was still at its height, he rose, motioned to his two companions, and withdrew to his own apartments.

"My friends," he said to them, "I oft do love this noisiness and laughter, but to-night I am sore wearied and long for quietness. Let us depart the house and be alone. Remain ye here until I come for you."

He withdrew and left them silent and wondering. It was months since these two men had been together, and they were friends; yet something in their host's manner had impressed them, and now that they were left alone, memories and thoughts

crowded too close for speech. At length the soldier broke the silence.

"Dost thou remember, Michael, how we did sup here with our Prince before I left the country? That night, both Winchester and his brother were of the party; thy father, likewise, and Baron Scrope of Masham. Courtenay then made his strong appeal to us that we would support him against mine uncle and not allow the metropolitical visitation of Oxford. Thou hast not forgot his plea?"

"Nay, 'twas well worthy to hold its place in every memory. Courtenay is a man of power, my lord."

"He is indeed, and the Prince loves him well. Tell me, does he share our banishment?"

"Nay, he was treating with the ambassadors of Burgundy, and so did not go before the King. Therefore, his Highness has disregarded him, but his labors at Oxford keep him from the court."

The soldier's memory was evidently still engaged upon that former evening at Cold Harbor, for he presently said,—

"The Prince sang for us then. How often have I thought of it and longed to hear his voice ring out again. Occleve was present—thou hast not forgotten, Michael?"

De la Pole smiled at the recollection. "Ay, and he read a poem to us in Henry's honor. And the Prince, reading the manuscript only once, brought his harp and sang the poem through without mis-

take. That was a happy evening, Thomas, by my faith."

The Earl of Arundel, for he it was, but lately returned to England, sighed a little as he answered: "How great are the changes since that merry time. Then the Prince's court was larger than his father's and men desired only to do him honor. And now, we two alone are left to share his exile. The hall where we have supped to-night was crowded then, and no man's place among us was assured unless he was invited to Cold Harbor. The music, and the plays which Harry loved—oh, dost remember when we three did act, and how the chamber rang with cheers and bravos? Upon mine honor, those were days of mirth. I would that we might live them o'er again!"

De la Pole laughed softly.

"Dost thou remember, Arundel, our last hunt together? Thou hadst thy roan that thou didst love well, and I my black mare, who has borne me bravely, and when at last we overtook the deer, lo, there was Harry Monmouth upon foot, easily keeping pace with our steeds, and finally with his own hand throwing the cord that brought the deer to the ground. I never thought that a man could be so fleet of foot as he."

"Ay, he has run thus many times. There're certain of the court that look with suspicion upon his feats. They claim that there is witchery behind them."

"They are but simple fools," the knight answered scornfully, "all men can so develop their bodies if they but choose."

"Few men have bodies knit so perfectly to be developed."

"True, in that the Prince hath 'vantage over all, but had he not made the best use of it, in careful training and much exercise, he would have been no better than ourselves. Dost thou recall the tournament at Windsor, and how men wondered when they marked his strength? It was the day that Scrope did fence against him. By St. George, but I've never seen a sight which gave me greater pleasure! The baron was so proud, so confident in his strength and skill, so eager to fight any one of us, and in the twinkling of an eye, the Prince disarmed him and held him at his mercy. Scrope gasped, glared at him, turned and walked away, and will not even let us speak of it."

The knight chuckled at the thought, and then frowned and made an exclamation beneath his breath.

The earl looked at him quickly. "Of what art thinking now?"

"Of Baron Scrope. Is he a friend of thine?"

Arundel laughed. "Nay, I have all the friends I wish without him. I never liked him; he is too grave and learned, too dutiful and too religious for me. I cannot tell thee why it should be so, but I misdoubt he is not all he seems."

"Excellent, my lord," cried De la Pole, "I echo thy very words. Lord Scrope and I are ever at sword's point, and yet he'll not consent to fight with me. Zounds! I do believe him a coward or a traitor! What didst thou think, Arundel, of his remaining a member of the council?"

"Methought it strange, yet he did not accompany thee before the King."

"Nay, but he's known as Harry Monmouth's friend! Is't not odd the King should honor him? And then that business of my cousin Anne's. Hast heard it?"

The earl shook his head. "Dost mean the Lady Stafford, Michael? I did never meet her."

"Ay, she it was. I' faith, I understand but little of the matter. One day, so says my wife (for I was absent), the Countess of Westmoreland announced that Lady Anne would wed the baron. Next morning my cousin comes before the Queen and says that she has changed her mind about the marriage and will that day send her refusal to the baron. At night, Scrope rides back from a hunt at the side of Lady Joan Holland and tells the Queen she is to be his bride. And when her Grace asked him about Anne Stafford, he swore that he had never sought to win her."

Arundel looked amazed. "What dost thou mean? Was there no more of it?"

"There were some lying tales about the Prince

and my fair cousin—Bess would tell me naught, for she declared that they were utter falsehoods."

"Lady Elizabeth has most excellent judgment."

"I' faith I'll tell my lady what thou sayest; 'twill please her well. The stories I have heard have no foundation, and I could swear that every one is false, yet I confess, Anne Stafford left the court her innocence unproven."

"And dost thou think Lord Scrope has wronged her?"

"Ay, I do believe it, yet I know not how. And he is wedded, while Lady Stafford is placed in a nunnery. The King himself dismissed her from the court."

"What said the Prince?"

"He knoweth where she is, but not the reason. His name was slandered, and his father bade us be silent. 'Tis true he was much with her, yet methinks they neither of them even thought of love."

A moment's silence, then Arundel spoke. "I would that we could solve the mystery. I love our Prince, as thou dost, and I know that he is far more virtuous than other men. And surely thy cousin Anne hath been wronged."

"Ay," answered Michael, "and I would give half my lands to prove her innocent, and yet I see no way."

"If the Prince knew all?"

"Well, dost thou care to tell it him, Arundel?"

"No, on my word," cried the earl, laughing, "he shall never learn the story from my lips. But thou, Michael? The lady is thy cousin."

"Ay, and if she were mine only sister, I would not tell the Prince to save her life."

"Peace, then, or thou hast done it, for he comes."

Harry entered hastily and closing the door behind him, came quickly forward with excitement in his face.

"Your pardons, that I've left you for so long. I sought a craft that we might spend an hour upon the water, but there has come a letter that changes all. What say ye, lords, wilt help me in a venture? Ye are both knights and bound to give your aid unto all damsels in distress. Ye are my only friends and I have sore need of ye."

"And thou mayst ask the hardest service of me, and I will give it willingly," cried Arundel; and Michael added,—

"My strength, my sword, my life, are in thy keeping—use them as thou wilt."

The Prince flushed happily. It greatly pleased him to have them trust him thus. "Nay, my dear lords, methinks that we shall have no need of blows; now hearken to my purpose." And opening a letter from the Countess of Westmoreland, Harry read as follows:

"I promised thee, good cousin, all help in my

power to keep a certain lady from being forced to sacrifice her life to Mother Church. My lord, the earl, has this day received a letter from his daughter Elizabeth, a nun in the Minories, saying that on the morrow the Lady Anne Stafford will take the veil. His daughter adds,—'She yielded with reluctance, urged to it by her mother, the former countess, who, after a final visit to the convent, has now returned to her distant castle.' I cannot interfere, my lord, thou mayst do what seemeth best to thee."

The faces of the two young men who listened to this epistle were a study. When Harry ceased his reading, Sir Michael turned his eyes away and asked: "Wouldst thou prevent her from becoming a nun?"

"I would," the Prince cried eagerly.

Then said De la Pole, in a cold voice: "What is thy reason for this step, my lord?"

The Prince glanced at him, astonished by his tone, but answered promptly: "Will ye both pledge your honor to keep the matter secret?"

They gave a hasty assent, and Harry continued very quietly:

"My well beloved friend, the Earl of March, desires Lady Stafford for his wife. I've wooed her for him, and obtained her promise that she will wed no man until the earl can gain his freedom and offer her his love. My father's banishment of me from his favor has kept me from obtaining Ed-

mund's liberty, but 'tis only for a time, and until the Lady Anne can know Lord Mortimer and either accept him or refuse him, as she will, I am resolved she shall not become a nun."

As he finished speaking De la Pole sprang forward and seized and kissed his hand, crying,—"I thank thee, noble Prince, for thy goodness toward my cousin. Tell us thy plans, and let us haste away, for it were cruel if we came too late."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Alas! to-day I would give everything
To see a friend's face, or hear a voice
That had the slightest tone of comfort in it."

LONGFELLOW.

THOSE were weary months which Lady Anne Stafford had spent in the Minories, that famous and influential convent belonging to the Franciscan Order of St. Clare, which was situated just outside the walls of London, near Aldgate. It was in November when her mother, receiving Lady Westmoreland's message, left her distant castle and came hurriedly to London. The proud, high-spirited woman was furious at the treatment her daughter had received, and no less angry with Anne herself. Lady Westmoreland had gone immediately to her mansion in London, taking Anne with her, and thither the countess came. The blood of her father, the royal Duke of Gloucester, and her mother, Eleanor Bohun, coheir of the proud Earl of Hereford, was throbbing in her veins, and she had scarce patience to listen to her hostess's story. She repeated with the utmost haughtiness the statement that Baron Scrope had asked her daughter's hand some months before, but she was deaf to Lady Westmoreland's suggestion that she should appear at court in defence of Anne.

"Never! I know the Queen too well for that. Dost think that I desire a rebuke? Oh, Scrope doth know that he is safe from vengeance. Her father is dead, Humphrey has seen but ten short years. We have neither kith nor kin nearer than thy husband and his sons, or Michael of Suffolk. There is no person to defend this maiden, so Scrope may speak his lies without restraint."

"Thou knowest," answered Joan Beaufort, soothingly, "that Richard, my eldest son, is but twelve years of age, while my lord's sons by Lord Stafford's sister, John and Ralph of Oversley, are married and busied with their wives and households. 'Tis thy misfortune, lady, not our fault, that Anne's fair name cannot be cleared by the sword."

"Her fair name, forsooth! Scrope's death could never clear it. Ay, mistress, thou mayst blush with shame! Didst then consider a few smiles from the Prince a worthy fate for one whose blood was noble as thine own?"

Anne raised her head with gentle dignity. "Dost thou doubt me, mother,—thine only daughter?"

"For what reason didst linger with the Prince? Come, answer. 'Tis rumored that thou didst inform the Queen that Prince Harry had a purpose in thus seeking thee. If thou canst clear thyself, I prithee, do it."

Anne had turned very pale, but she answered firmly: "I cannot tell thee, mother, of the reason until the Prince permits. He has my promise that

I will keep the matter a close secret, and thou knowest, madam, a Stafford never breaks a pledge once given."

The countess flushed and was for an instant silenced, for, since she had promptly consoled herself for the earl's death by marrying William Bourchier, she had forfeited the right to the proud name of Stafford, although she chose to retain her title and live upon her great estates until her son should come of age.

Lady Westmoreland, who, although she had not yet seen the Prince, was convinced that Anne was greatly wronged, seized the opportunity to begin a vigorous defence of the maiden, but the mother interrupted angrily,—"What right hadst thou to give thy word unto the Prince? Fie on thee—these excuses serve for nothing! Dost think that I can soon forget what thou hast done? Refused a marriage with a nobleman in favor at the court and of high rank, a union of which thou mightst well be proud, and by thy refusal bring on thyself the charge of evil relations with our Prince. By Heaven, I had supposed that he of all men at the court was most virtuous!"

"And so he is, madam," cried his loving aunt. "Whatever Harry's purpose was, be sure that 'twas all nobleness and honor."

"Mayhap thou art right," answered the lady, mollified. "It may be that I have misjudged them both; but, Anne, thy conduct is not less blamable,

for even if thou art wholly innocent, the court doth think thee guilty, and thou hast dragged thy father's name into the dust. Thou shalt have no further opportunity to bring upon thee such suspicions. Thou shalt be placed within the Minories."

With dismay upon her face, Anne made a vigorous protest and Lady Joan added her plea, but the countess was inexorable.

"Nay, thou shalt go, and there the matter ends. But as thou bearest thyself within the convent, I will determine thy plan of future life."

At first, therefore, Anne was far from hopeless over her situation. She submitted quietly to the new life, trusting that her mother would relent, and feeling confident that the Prince would not allow her to be made a nun,—she, indeed, looked almost daily for rescue. As time went on, however, and she received neither message nor visit, her heart sank within her. Then came the news, discussed even within the cloister walls, that Harry had left both council and court and abandoned himself to pleasure. Anne was not slow to perceive that this meant the delay and probably the failure of whatever plans he had made for her. While he was living such a life how could he persuade the stern King to grant Lord March's release? And this, she understood, was the first step that must be taken before her own freedom could be accomplished. At first, she blamed the Prince for not breaking his

trust and setting the earl free, but she soon realized that the King would only set about his recapture and confine him more strictly than before, and her marriage would be more hopeless than ever.

It was at this period of her discouragement that her mother came to the convent, not indeed to restore her freedom, but to urge upon her the wisdom of taking the veil. The countess's anger had long since died away, and she made it plain that she entirely trusted her daughter. "But remember," she said quietly, "my single word cannot prove thine innocence unto the court. There it is still supposed thou hast done wrong, and even were the Queen to receive thee again, how, thinkest thou, would other ladies treat thee?"

Anne sighed. She knew only too well the jealousies and suspicions of the court. "Nay, madam," she answered, "I have no desire to lead again that restless, unnatural life. Prithee, take me back once more to Stafford Castle and let me live there quietly and in peace."

The countess looked amazed. "Why, who would seek thee there to marry thee? By my troth, fair daughter, thy future looketh black. While at the court, Lord Scrope asked for thy hand, and thou didst deny him. It was unwise in thee, ay, most imprudent. Even had not the Queen sought to sully thy fair name, it were unlikely another noble gentleman would seek thy hand when there was chance of such rebuke. And now that thou art

looked upon askance, what lord would dream of asking thee in marriage?"

Anne's heart sank lower and lower. For an instant she meditated breaking her promise and telling Lady Stafford of Lord March—surely the Prince would pardon this betrayal. Then, like a sword-thrust in her heart, came a doubt of Mortimer's love. "Did he know all, would he not scorn to think of me? How can I ever hope for marriage with him—I who have been sent disgraced from court?"

Her mother watched the crimson rise and fade in her cheeks, the quiver of her lips and the bright tears which sparkled in her clear eyes, and putting out her arms, drew her into a motherly embrace.

"Sweetheart, thou needst not weep. 'Tis not thy fault that the Prince was unwise in his gracious favors, but I do blame his Highness very greatly. He must have known—"

"Thou shalt not blame him, mother," cried the maiden hastily, and raising her head from the countess's breast,—"Prince Henry is the very soul of honor, and no man equals him in loving friendship. When he did learn his friend the E—" she checked herself hastily, and hid her face.

"Nay, daughter, tell me what is in thy heart."

But Anne only shook her head and clung to her mother desperately. "I cannot tell thee, oh, believe me, madam; but some day thou shalt know the beautiful truth. Oh, I did hope so much, and now,

even he—it will be months ere—the Prince's amazing conduct—" and the maiden broke into such a passion of weeping that the countess was dismayed.

"Nay, my sweet, I prithee cease these tears. Look up—the sun is breaking from behind the clouds. Methinks that 'tis an omen for thy life. Thy darkest hour has surely passed away. Nay, daughter, kiss me and be at peace once more."

With a long, shuddering sob, Anne raised her head, pushed back the radiant luxury of her hair, and put up her rosy mouth for the promised kiss; but her eyes were yet dim with tears.

"Oh, madam, thou art right—I cannot wed, and it is therefore the part of wisdom that I become a nun."

But the countess answered soothingly,—"Nay, we will speak no more of this at present. Let thy thoughts dwell upon a happier theme, and when I've gone thou shalt consider it again."

But Anne could not put it from her mind. At length the countess, seeing how the thing was haunting her, slowly began to dwell on it once more, describing all the virtues and good works practised by the nuns of St. Clare, placing before her every benefit, and drawing a dazzling picture of a future when she should be the abbess of a wealthy convent with rank and power exceeding that enjoyed by many a maiden lingering at the court. Then did she pause, and wisely said farewell.

During the week that passed ere her next visit, Anne spent her time in prayer and meditation. Her mind would dwell on all that she had lost and linger on the virtues of that noble earl who had sought her love. Then she would dream of that gallant friend, that brave and honorable lord, Henry Monmouth; and then, with downcast eyes and reddened cheeks would come the remembrance of those wretched days and all that she had suffered, and anger against the Queen, and confused wonder at Scrope's conduct, would overwhelm her until she sank upon her knees and wept. Anon, becoming peaceful, soothed by her very tears, she bent her mind upon a quiet future within the sacred cloisters of the Minories.

So passed the days, in tumult and distress, yet always leading to the same conclusion: "The Prince forgets that I am still alive, and there's no assistance he can give to me. Belike Lord March has heard these evil falsehoods, and so has closed his heart to me forever. 'Tis plain that I can never hope for marriage, so I must wed with holy Mother Church."

When the countess made her second visit, Anne was calm and full of resolution. "It shall be as thou desirest, madam. I have considered all thou saidst, mother, and am convinced that thou hast spoken wisdom. Prithee, say unto the abbess that I'm resolved to take the veil at once."

When Lady Stafford left the convent walls to

ride away to her northern castle, she bade her daughter a fond farewell, commended her for her nobleness, and added: "When I am next in London, I will come and hold some converse with thee. Do thy duty and give thy heart to God. Ere many years, methinks thou wilt have risen to high place."

She ceased, and kissed her, well assured that Anne would live in peace a nun, and die an abbess.

Could she have looked into the future and witnessed their next meeting, she would have been lost in wonder and amazement. Though we have formed our plans most carefully, one breath of fate may overturn them all.

CHAPTER XIX.

"One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall door and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
'They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth young Lochinvar."

SCOTT.

THE eventful day was come at last—the day for which every inmate of the convent had waited with the utmost eagerness. Even in such a great and wealthy institution as the Minories, the admission of a new sister into the holy bond was an event of the utmost importance. The nuns were ignorant of Anne's story, but they had heard rumors that she had been a great lady of the court, and that some mighty lord had loved her well; but whether this noble lord had died, or she refused him, they could only guess. Her constant tears, however, made the former explanation of her presence seem more likely. Her cousin, the Lady Elizabeth Neville, who on account of her high rank received many privileges denied to the humbler sisters, became at once her friend and confidante, although even she knew not of the reason for Anne's reluctance to take the vows of the Order of St. Clare. Soon, however, all hesitation had ended; the abbess

had joyfully accepted her decision—she hoped the convent would be enriched by a fair proportion of Lady Stafford's wealth—and now in the beautiful chapel the final ceremony was to take place which would decide forever the future life of the high-born maiden.

Since every lady was obliged to choose between marriage and the Church, both careers offering an almost equal opportunity for exalted position and great influence, love alone making the difference, the convent was the resort of every maiden who, for lack of beauty, rank, or opportunity, judged it impossible that she could marry to advantage. But that Lady Anne Stafford, whose sweet loveliness many might have envied, whose proud birth and noble heritage were known to all, and who, moreover, had lately been at court,—that she should have despaired of marriage seemed impossible; and her entrance into the religious life could only be explained upon the supposition that she had loved and lost, and therefore would not wed.

If the nuns had been greatly interested in Anne during her short novitiate, they were still more so on this, the day when she was finally to take the veil. Realizing fully how irrevocable were the vows she was about to assume, it is little wonder that during the long night watches Anne had not closed her eyes. She had spent many of the weary hours in prayer, but to her great dismay she found herself, even on her knees, longing for some escape

from her doom. She had supposed her mind to be entirely calm. She had made her decision after much thought and prayer; she had bidden her mother farewell with tearless eyes, and had quietly taken her place among the sisters. As time advanced she had grown really eager for the final ceremonies which would bestow upon her the right to share their beautiful life, and as she witnessed, day by day, the charities for which the Gray Nuns are so noted, her heart was filled with pleasure at the thought that she could soon take part in them.

But now, when the last act was at hand which would bestow upon her all that she desired, her courage suddenly failed her; the virtues and advantages of the life were forgotten, and her heart cried longingly for love, love, love! "What care I for Church or charity? What even for a convent of mine own? I'd rather be an humble wife, even living in a prison chamber, and have the love Lord Mortimer could give me, than be the abbess of the noblest convent within the limits of our England. O God! why didst thou give me hope but to torment me with this buried life? Were I not a woman and so helpless, I'd break my bonds asunder and flee from here. But Heaven help me, there is no haven in London—I must submit to this unhappy fate!"

Little wonder, then, that Anne's face was pale and her eyes red from weeping when the morning dawned. She attended early matins, and then shut

herself in her cell and refused to partake of the food which was sent her. Thus the long day wore away, until the fatal hour finally arrived and the chapel bells called on all to assemble for the solemn service. Two by two the nuns came, in long procession, dressed in their gray gowns, with veils falling from their heads to their shoulders and leaving the sweet faces but half visible. Their hands were clasped before them, and their heads bowed, as they glided forward silently to kneel in rows upon the cold stone floor. They were followed by several attendant sisters of higher order, and finally the abbess herself, who took her place at their head. The venerable, white-haired bishop, attended by two priests, came slowly forth and stood before the altar, while the nuns rose to their feet and broke into a Latin chant which lasted for several minutes. As they ended, the doors at the end of the chapel were again thrown open, and the novice entered and came forward, supported on each side by an attendant nun, Elizabeth Neville being upon the right.

The Lady Stafford was dressed in robes of white, with a white veil of fine silk draped about her shoulders and concealing her long and beautiful hair. As she moved between the lines of nuns with stately grace, her pure white face was calm, her eyes clear and seeming intensely black in contrast with her pale cheeks, her mouth was firmly closed, her clasped hands did not tremble, and her step

betrayed neither faltering nor hesitation. To look at her, no one would have dreamed of the agony she had suffered in the night. As she approached the altar and knelt, the nuns sank upon their knees and chanted prayers of supplication for her who was so soon to be one of them.

Then the bishop turned and looked down upon the novice expectantly, and Anne, summoning all her strength to keep her voice firm and quiet, raised her head and distinctly repeated the formula in which maidens request admittance into the Franciscan Order. The bishop gazed upon her beautiful face with admiration and some wonder.

"Is it thy true desire to enter this sacred life and devote thyself to the service of God and man?" he asked, in his quavering voice.

"It is, reverend father," she answered bravely, but with lowered eyes.

"Dost thou swear that there is no reason why thou shouldst not be received?"

"I do so swear," breathed the voice faintly.

The bishop was not entirely convinced, yet the wealth and station of the lady caused him to put aside his scruples.

"Holy Mother in God," he said, addressing the abbess, "wilt thou receive this maiden into thy fold, and keep and guard her faithfully?"

Upon his words there sounded a crash as it might have been of thunder, or of metal ringing upon metal, but every eye was fixed upon the

group before the altar, and every ear listened eagerly for the abbess's answer.

"I will receive her," she said, "and with my might will I guard and protect her from all harm or dishonor."

Again sounded the crash, followed by a confused uproar, in a distant part of the cloister, but the nuns were too intent upon the scene before them to give heed. The bishop gazed upon the kneeling maiden.

"Rise, daughter," he commanded, "thou shalt be received. Withdraw and put upon thee the habit of the Order of St. Clare; then come before me to make thy solemn and perpetual vow to live a life of poverty, chastity and obedience."

Anne rose to her feet, but even as Elizabeth and her companion came forward to lead her away, the doors of the chapel were thrown violently open, a loud voice cried,—"Hold, in the name of the King!" and six men, three of them muffled in great riding cloaks, so that even their faces were hidden, and three in the uniform of the King's guards, advanced into the chapel. The frightened nuns ran screaming to either side, huddling together as if for mutual protection, some sobbing and one or two fainting with terror. Anne shrank back against the wall and the bishop and his priests stood amazed and dumb. The abbess alone kept her self-possession. "Peace, ye fools," she cried to the nuns, then sternly addressing the

men who rapidly advanced,—"What means this intrusion, sirrahs, into the holy precincts of the Church?"

The three foremost men came forward, the men-at-arms remaining near the entrance. Receiving no answer, the abbess again cried out to them to leave the chapel. "Have ye no respect for God? This ground is sacred—even the King's men have no right upon it!"

Without answering, the three continued to advance until they had reached the altar. Then one of them quickly stepped to where Anne Stafford stood, trembling and terrified, and whispered in her ear,—"Fear not, fair lady, wilt thou go with me?"

She started at the voice, and uttered a glad cry of assent. Quick as lightning he pulled off his rich cloak, revealing himself as a knight dressed in full armor with his visor down. Wrapping the cloak about the maiden, he seized her in his arms and started toward the door. The abbess sprang forward to prevent him, crying,—"Forward, maidens, close the doors and bar their progress!" But instantly from out the two cloaked figures standing near flashed two glistening swords, and as the men rapidly faced the abbess, one cried,—"Whosoever bars our way must sacrifice his life."

The leader, with Anne in his arms, ran swiftly forward as if he carried but a feather; the other two followed him, gazing backward that none might

approach, and in an instant all six men had left the chapel.

"Run, maidens," cried the abbess's voice, "bid them bar the outer doors!" But not a nun stirred. "Ye cowards, will ye not obey me?" she cried, and swiftly went herself,—but it was too late. Other men had guarded the retreat, the attendants were shrieking and wringing their hands in fright, and the doors stood wide. The abbess sprang to the entrance hoping to call some passer-by to her aid, but two soldiers guarding the doorway forced her within, and pulled to the heavy portal. Opening the sliding panel of the door she tried to call for help, but saw only her assailants, and ere she could determine on any action the Lady Anne had been placed in a horse litter, the men had sprung to their saddles, and in a moment the entire party of a score of men had ridden away. The abbess watched them, breathless, and in amazement saw them ride to the near-by drawbridge, which was promptly lowered, pass through the Aldgate, and enter the city walls. With the utmost rapidity possible she secured a messenger and sent him into the city, but it was an hour before the great bell of St. Paul's rang out into the evening air to call together the townfolk to the sheriff's aid. They assembled at Cheapside by the score, men of all ages and classes, mostly armed with an anlace, or Irish knife, although some had pikes, and a few, swords.

The sheriff himself addressed them, telling them that a noble lady had been carried off by force from the convent of the Minories, and had entered the city. Had any seen a party of horsemen bearing a lady's litter? Two or three had seen such a party, but they differed widely in description—a lady travelling thus, surrounded by her guards, was no uncommon spectacle. The sheriff then commanded them to patrol the town from end to end and seek to rescue the lady. The men dispersed, but when the morning dawned no one had found the Lady Anne Stafford.

Meantime, a messenger was spurring north to bring to the lady's mother a message from the abbess, telling her that her daughter had been stolen from the convent. The frantic countess prepared for an immediate return to London, but ere she could set out another messenger arrived and delivered her the letter following:

"Madam, you have already learned, methinks, your daughter is taken from the Minories. It was against the law of nature and of man that she should be made a nun. You need have no fear for her, she is in the safe care of a noble lady, there to remain in peace and secrecy until such time as she can wed a lord who will be worthy of her father's daughter. Seek not to find her, for you cannot do't; but rest in peace, for she is safe and well.

"This from the hand of Michael de la Pole, son to my Lord of Suffolk."

CHAPTER XX.

"I loved you ere I knew you; know you now,
And, having known you, love you better still."
OWEN MEREDITH.

"FEAR not!" Those words sounding in Anne's ears, brought sudden and entire rest to her troubled heart. He had come then, at last, her deliverer, her friend! One instant more, and she had made her vows and it had been too late; but as always, Henry of Monmouth had come in time—he never failed, he never waited until the opportunity was past, but seized it at the moment. These were the comforting thoughts that filled Lady Stafford's mind, as the Prince bore her down the chapel, between the rows of trembling nuns, and on through the convent itself, to the open air. The confusion of the scene, the stern commands of the abbess and the terror of the women—none of these things impressed her, for her heart was throbbing with relief and joy and gratitude. It was the cool wind blowing upon her face that brought her to a sudden realization of her position, and she glanced swiftly around her. At the entrance stood a party of men, possibly a dozen in number, each with his horse's bridle thrown over his arm. They were guardsmen save for one who was muffled in a riding cloak like the Prince's two companions.

To her great relief, for she had no strength for a journey on horseback, Anne saw also a handsome litter, covered with a round vault with openings at the side, and with a fine horse fastened to the shafts at each end. The Prince hurriedly placed her within the litter, where she found robes and cloaks for her comfort, and then the men mounted their horses. The other members of the party now hastily came forth from the convent and sprang to their saddles, and in an instant the little company had started at a brisk trot with the litter in their midst. They rode directly to the city wall, and one of the soldiers summoned a warder and demanded passage in the King's name. The drawbridge, which had been raised only a moment before, when the sun sank in the west, was promptly lowered at the call, the gates were opened, and they passed into the city. The warder glanced rather curiously at the litter, and noting the direction from which they had come, asked of one of the guard: "Have ye been robbing yonder nunnery?" But ere the man could answer, one of the gentlemen loosed his cloak so that the torchlight fell upon his armor, and said haughtily,—

"My cousin has been staying with the abbess for several days, and we have but gone to bring her to the city."

"I crave your pardon, my lord," answered the man hastily. And then as the rider flung him a piece of gold, he cried,—"God bless your lordship

and the young lady. I will never forget your lordship's kindness."

That may have been one reason why when an unusually alert citizen sought two hours later to learn from the authorities at Aldgate of the route taken by those who had stolen Anne from the convent, the warder told him shortly that the company to which he alluded had not passed through *his* gate.

Once within the city the little party traversed the less frequented streets, bearing steadily toward the west, where Ludgate led to the open country, and the Prince now rode up to the side of the litter.

"Thou art not frightened, lady?"

"Nay, my lord," she answered, smiling out at him; "why should I fear when thou art with me?"

"I thank thee for thy trust," answered Harry, smiling. "It is a bold deed to snatch thee thus from the very arms of the Church. Thou dost not regret this life that thou hast lost?"

"Never, my lord! I longed for freedom, and thou givest it me. Whatever thou hast planned for me is good."

"I desire thy happiness, fair maiden, and I believe thy future will be happy."

Harry turned and motioned to a companion, who promptly drew rein beside him. "Thou hast not forgot thy cousin Michael, lady?" asked a cheery voice.

Anne started and leaned out to peer into the darkness. "Is it truly thou?" she cried.

The knight laughed. "Ay, without doubt; didst think that I would countenance so merry a plot and not join in it? Ah, but my cousin countess will weep to-night."

"Oh, my mother. I' faith, I had forgot. What will she think? Cousin Michael, canst thou not send her a message?"

"What! To take thee to the nunnery again?"

"Nay, Heaven forbid! I meant not that; but she will be sore astonished at the news, and I would fain spare her anxiety. Moreover, she will never cease her effort until she's found out my abiding place."

"Michael," spoke the Prince, "the lady's wise. I prithee send a message to the countess telling her that her daughter is safe and well, and that 'tis useless to seek for her. Sign thine own name, and she will be content."

Michael, after some further argument, consented. Tablets were produced; and the knight, without dismounting, wrote the letter and gave it to one of the guardsmen, who separated from them and started on his journey.

Meanwhile, the Prince addressed the lady: "Mistress, permit me that I present to thee my dear friend Thomas, Earl of Arundel." The young nobleman rode up, and loosening his cloak he raised his visor that she might see his face in the dim twilight. Anne extended her hand, saying earnestly: "My lord, I thank thee for thy kindness to a maiden unknown to thee."

He bent low on his horse and kissed her hand, exclaiming with the knightly grace which became him well,—"While Arundel lives, his sword lies at the service of Lady Anne Stafford."

She flushed and answered shyly,—"I am much blessed in having such good friends."

"Thy friends are indeed many, fair mistress," smiled Arundel, "and they are powerful, likewise; for few at court would our bold Prince undertake such a venture."

While they chatted, Ludgate came into view, and the Prince rode on ahead and hailed the warder:

"Ho! Dougale, art within?"

A tall, powerfully built man appeared in the doorway, and came promptly forward.

"Dost know my voice, Dougale?"

"Ay, your Grace, I know it well."

"I am leaving the city with my friends, and quietly, as thou seest. Open the gates and lower the drawbridge with speed."

The man obeyed promptly and the little party passed through. Harry waited until the last, then turned toward the warder. "I trust to thy discretion, Dougale," he said quietly.

"My lord," answered the man gravely, "neither threats nor torture shall force my tongue to speak of this event."

The Prince drew off his gauntlet and extended his hand. The man kissed it fervently, murmuring,—

"God bless thee, noble Harry, and keep thee safe from harm."

An instant later the drawbridge was in place once more, and the one clue to their destination destroyed. For the wise Prince knew that by entering the city walls, instead of riding around them, they would confuse their pursuers and throw them off the scent. Even that short mile of streets from one gate to the other was sufficient for the purpose.

Harry rejoined his party with a light heart. Riding to Lady Anne's side, he presented to her such food and drink as they had carried with them, and she partook of it gratefully. "We are, methinks, safe from immediate pursuit," he told her gravely; "but we must on with haste. For the night we'll rest at Windsor."

She blushed a little under cover of the darkness, and asked him shyly: "Is Lord March at Windsor?"

"Not now," answered the Prince; but ere she had space to wonder at it, a horseman ranged beside her, and loosened his cloak about him, so that his handsome head was bare. She turned, startled, and in the clear, bright moonlight saw a face that never left her memory. It was that of a man young in years and beardless, so that his sweet, firm mouth showed plainly. The delicacy and exquisite clearness of his features spoke of many generations of noble blood. His wealth of fine brown hair fell in profusion about his face and shoulders, and his deep brown eyes were bent upon her with an eagerness of longing

that made her tremble. One breathless instant, and then the Prince's voice sounded in her ears. "Lady, Lord March is here!"

She gave a little cry and leaned quickly toward her lover. "Thou art free!" she said in tones that trembled eagerly. "How has this thing come to pass?"

"Nay, lady, thou mistakest," he answered sadly. "My freedom is only of the Prince's goodness for one day. In a few hours we must reach Windsor Castle, and then I go back to my prison chamber."

A little sigh escaped her. He rode closer. "Dost thou pity my cruel lot? Prithee, give me one word from those sweet lips of thine."

"Is thy lot so cruel?" she asked him shyly.

"Ay, 'tis bitter, lady. When I love with all my heart and soul, how can I live content within four walls?"

"But thou art free to-night, my lord!"

"A short two hours! What recompense for all the gloomy days of silent misery?"

"Methought," she answered archly, "that an instant's happiness were worth an eternity of wretchedness."

He started to seize the little hand that was just visible, then checked himself. "What chance have I for even one instant's blessed happiness? The Prince commands I shall not speak of love. He says that I have nothing to offer thee, nor can I wed thee while I am a captive. He takes thee to my sister Eleanor,

she who is wife unto the Lord of Devon, and there, he vows, thou shalt remain in peace. But for myself he bids me wait in patience, tells me that when I'm a free man once more and have my rank and title at the court, I shall have leave to woo thee at my leisure; but now I must not speak a word of love."

She turned upon him and asked with haughtiness. "And dost thou let the Prince control thy speech? Methought all Englishmen could use their tongues."

"But," he protested, delighted at her spirit, "surely the Prince is wise. What right have I to whisper words of hope and love to thee when I can offer thee but this alone?"

"My lord, a woman's heart asks for naught else."

He seized her little white hand in his own, and kissed it once and twice, and yet again. She drew it from him in pretended anger. "Alas, my lord, is this thy chivalry? Wilt thou thus attack a helpless woman?"

"Ay, sweetheart, a thousand times would I! Ah, if I might but have thee in my arms and ride with thee alone across the world!"

"Methinks I should be wearied," she replied with a soft laugh.

"Wouldst thou, fairest maiden? Wouldst thou indeed?"

"What, across the world? Upon mine honor, 'twould be a lengthy journey. And when thou didst reach the end of it wouldst thou bear me off into unfathomed space?"

"Ay," he answered softly; "thou wouldst have wings, my sweet, to soar unto the skies and to our God. And since I held thee in my arms, thy wings would help to bear me up to heaven. Wouldst thou take me with thee, fairest maiden?"

"Methinks," she answered, but in a tone so low that his lover's ear could scarcely catch the words,—"methinks that we might pass some heavenly hours upon this earth before we go above."

* * * * * * *

What cruel tricks time plays upon us! Surely the sands within the hour-glass had not run out the first quarter ere the Prince rode up and joined the lovers.

"Edmund, the towers of Windsor rise before us. Thou must say farewell and ride with me."

The earl gazed about him in amazement. "Methought we had only now left London. Is it possible we are at Windsor?"

The Lady Anne leaned forward toward the Prince and asked pleadingly: "My lord, cannot the earl ride with me to Exeter? Ah, good my lord, wilt thou not grant this boon? 'Twill only be for a few days, my lord."

The Prince shook his head. He could not trust his voice. Mortimer rode close to him. "Dear my lord, give me this blessing. Thou sayest thou art my friend—wilt thou refuse me this little favor? What are a few days compared to the long years of my confinement?"

"Peace, it cannot be."

"Thou art cruel to me!" cried the earl. "'Tis not much I ask of thee, and thou denyest it. I' faith, but I will go in spite of thee!"

Harry laid a quick hand upon his rein. "Listen, Edmund; I have neither power nor skill to keep thine absence secret longer than to-night. The royal guards would not obey my word did they discover thou wert not within. Whilst I myself was travelling afar the news would ring through England, and the King, furious, would send his soldiers for thee. Were we two found together thou wouldst die, and even I might suffer death for treason. Come, we approach; bid thy sweetheart good-night."

Sadly but submissively Lord March leaned from his horse and kissed the lady's hand. "Dear one, farewell. God have thee in his keeping. These blessed moments are worth eternity."

"Farewell," she answered with a little sob,—"God grant that we may meet again erelong."

They crossed the drawbridge and rode into the courtyard. The horses were led away, and while the Prince and his friends entered the great hall, where instantly all was confusion, caused by the unexpected visit, Mortimer separated from them, and quietly sought the garden which gave him secret access to his chamber.

Next morning the travellers assembled at an early hour, refreshed by their night's rest. Lady Anne came from the women's apartments, her cheeks

flushed with excitement and her eyes bright. The Prince greeted her with formal ceremony and placed her at his right hand, with Sir Michael at his left.

It was by no means an unusual thing for the Prince to appear at Windsor with such guests; and a glance here or a smile there had sufficed to make the servants suppose that Michael and Lady Anne were lately wed. The Prince's delight in romance was well known, and what more likely than that he should give his protection to this bridal party?

While horses were being saddled for the journey, Harry gave his escort to the lady and led her once more to that beautiful garden in which the roses were blooming in profusion. She gave a cry of delight and plucked a great red one, all wet and glistening in the early morning. While she yet lingered, a door opened in the wall and she raised her eyes and gazed into her lover's happy face. . . . Only a moment could they be together, but when the Prince came forward to their side, the earl said,—

"My lord, before we part, permit us, in thy presence, to exchange rings in token of our betrothal."

Harry glanced hesitatingly at the maiden. "Were it best," he asked, "that thou shouldst give thy hand, fair lady, without the countess's consent?"

"My lord," she answered sweetly, "I will never wed without my mother's sanction; yet if she deny me, I still would wear his ring in token of my promise to wed Lord March, or else to die a maid."

"And I, my lord," cried Mortimer, "will wed the Lady Anne, or die without a wife."

"God bless ye both," said the Prince tenderly, and joining their hands together, he himself made the exchange of rings. For one brief instant the earl took his loved one in his arms, and placed upon her sweet lips the first kiss; then the Prince spoke, and reluctant, yet obedient, they separated and went their different ways.

CHAPTER XXI.

"You must come home with me and be my guest;
You will give joy to me, and I will do
All that is in my power to honor you."

SHELLEY.

AMONG the many noble qualities of Prince Harry was his constant thoughtfulness for others, and this quality was never better illustrated than in the case of Lady Anne Stafford. When he first learned of the maiden's departure from the court, he had at once seen that it might be necessary to take her suddenly and forcibly from the convent, and he had promptly made all arrangements for that possibility. The sequel proved his wisdom; for the failure of the Burgundian marriage and his own disgrace had made it impossible for him even to ask for Mortimer's pardon, and but for his forethought, Lady Anne would have been compelled to take the veil. As it was, however, her present and future happiness was secure. Troubled by Anne's predicament, and by Lady Westmoreland's inability to help her, the Prince's mind had hastily considered every lady of the court. He had thought seriously of Anne of Conisborough, as being sister to Lord March, but many objections occurred to him. The lady was far from strong, and she was engrossed by her first-born son and by her

constant attendance at the court, for she seldom left London. As Harry puzzled over the problem, a sudden solution occurred to him, and quitting his aunt's apartments, he had promptly sought the Countess of Devon. It was some time before he found her, seated quite alone in a distant hall and bending over an illuminated manuscript of one of Chaucer's poems,—so engrossed that she did not hear him until he spoke.

"Lady Devon, I have been searching for thee."

She started, and raised her head. She was a small woman, dressed simply in dark green velvet, and she wore no jewels. Her face was delicate and sensitive, but without much beauty. Her eyes were large and shy, and her manner showed a lack of ease and assurance which prevented her from displaying those noble and attractive qualities of sweetness, gentleness and purity which she nevertheless possessed. Eleanor Mortimer had seldom appeared at court with her husband, the Earl of Devon, preferring to spend quiet and contented days in their distant castle of Rougemont at Exeter, sitting among her maidens, spinning or playing upon the harp, and freely opening her heart to those around her.

When the earl's first wife died he was a man of fifty years, and almost totally blind; yet the young Lady Eleanor had gladly married him, and with all her tender heart had devoted herself to her husband. He was very fond of her, proud of

her sweet voice and love of poetry, and boastful of her many virtues and her skilful management of his scores of servants; but he knew that she did not appear to advantage among other noble ladies, so he rarely asked her to accompany him, when, in spite of his blindness, he made frequent journeys to London, and took part with zest in all the pleasures of the court.

Upon this occasion, however, he had told her that without an occasional change of scene she would grow old before her time. He had patted her cheek and said that he was not content that she should live in such seclusion—let her don her richest garments and boldly claim her place among the highest—and she had reluctantly consented to accompany him.

The ladies of the court were too self-engrossed and too eager for admiration to bestow the slightest attention upon this plain little lady, virtuous and high-born though she might be. Her only sister, Anne of Conisborough, greeted her kindly, but failed really to understand her, so that the Lady of Devon spent her hours very much alone; and was, therefore, far happier than she had expected to be. Now, she was enjoying one of the Canterbury Tales and was both astonished and dismayed on hearing her name spoken and finding the handsome and gaily dressed Prince standing before her. She was not ignorant that could the ladies of the court have heard his words, they would have instantly

been filled with wonder and envy at her good fortune, nor was she indifferent to the charms of the gallant lord to whom she had been presented upon his arrival but a few hours before. Yet the prospect of a conversation with him filled her with actual terror, and as she rose hastily she glanced swiftly about her as if meditating actual flight. But Harry had no intention of permitting her to escape.

"I have interrupted thy reading," he said gently. "It is passing strange to see a lady of the court spending her hours thus."

He had touched upon one of her strongest principles; and forgetting fright in indignation, she answered with spirit:

"Does not your Grace deem it more profitable than to spend the time in idle gossip?"

The Prince flashed upon her his brilliant smile, and answered merrily:

"Oh, didst thou think that I was blaming thee? Nay, Lady Devon, I but envied thee. 'Tis many days since I have found an hour for quiet pleasure with poetry or music. Dost thou not sing, fair lady?"

She looked startled at the question, and answered shyly,

"Oh, at times, my lord. How didst thou guess?"

Harry laughed and begged her to be seated, ere he answered:

"Does not the one enjoyment mean the other? Thou couldst not rightly love all poetry unless

thou hadst the love for music also. Thy brother shares thy taste in both these arts."

"My brother," she cried, sinking upon the stone bench and scarcely noticing that the Prince placed himself beside her, so interested was she in his words. "Dost thou then know Edmund Mortimer?"

"Ay, truly; for the King placed him in my personal charge full two years since. If thou couldst see him, thou wouldst love him, lady. He is exceeding handsome, and learned also, gentle and possessing every virtue."

"Dost thou know him well?" she asked, astonished at his praise.

"Ay, as mine own soul. He is my dearest friend, and I do love him above all other men. We have been oft together and I have spent many happy hours within his prison chamber. It is for his sake, madam, that I sought thee, for thou canst do us both a mighty favor."

"Can I? Be assured I'll gladly do it." Every trace of embarrassment had left her now, and her face was lighted with an eager, happy smile, that seemed to transform her whole appearance. There was color in her formerly pale cheeks, and a light in her eyes, as she added quickly: "I have not seen my brother for many years, but it would give me the greatest joy to serve him. Prithee tell me what 'tis thou desirest, and I will grant it, even to half my wealth!"

He smiled his pleasure, and then answered simply,—"I'll tell thee the entire story, madam, if thou wilt promise to keep it a close secret."

She promised eagerly, and he gave her a brief account of Mortimer's love story, and the reason, as he supposed, why Lady Anne had left the court. Eleanor had arrived after her departure, but she had heard the event discussed, and was delighted at the explanation. The Prince continued,—

"It is my hope that on the occasion of my coming marriage, my father will give Lord March his freedom; but since, by some mischance, there may be delay, and as I fear the Countess of Stafford might insist that Anne become a nun, I desire some method of placing her in safety. If circumstances force me to this act, wilt thou consent to guard her for thy brother?"

"Thou meanest thou wouldst take her from the convent?"

"Ay, if no other plan be possible, and I must find a safe abiding place where she may rest until the earl is free."

"Oh," she cried, "I will receive her gladly! I know that my Lord Edward will consent, and I will guard her for my brother's sake."

Without betraying the secret, she secured her husband's permission, and the Prince was greatly delighted at his success. Throughout the long winter, therefore, the Lady Devon waited for some

word, her eagerness to see the maiden increasing day by day. As the months passed by, however, she had ceased to expect her, and therefore when a horseman rode into Exeter and delivered a letter —"From my lord, the Prince,"—her cheeks grew crimson, her eyes sparkled and her hand trembled violently as she read the missive.

"For the Lady Eleanor, Wife to My Lord Courtenay of Devon, these:

"Thou hast not forgotten thy promise, I am assured. I come to claim protection for the Lady Anne of Stafford, who travelleth under my escort. We follow closely upon the messenger, and pray that thou wilt grant to us a welcome. I commend me to your ladyship most humbly.

"HENRY P."

The Earl of Devon, learning of the arrival, quickly sought his wife. "How now, my lady! How comes it that the Prince sends messages to *thee?* Read me the letter."

She obeyed, adding anxiously: "Thou gavest me permission to receive the maid while we were at the court. Thou dost remember?"

My lord frowned a little and knit his brows, as he listened, then asked in some surprise: "Why should the Lady Anne Stafford journey hither? And for what reason dost thou receive her, madam?"

She answered quickly,—"Lord March, my

brother, loves her, and the Prince requests that we will harbor her until Edmund is free to woo and wed. I asked thy leave, my lord,—"

Courtenay interrupted, "Nay, I am quite content that she shall come, if thou wilt find pleasure in her company. I have heard naught about thy brother's love."

" 'Twas a close secret, my lord, I prithee speak not of it."

He promised, and asked to hear the note again, then went to his own chamber, where he forgot it in preparing for a hunt. A dozen maidens might take up their abode under his roof, and it would cause him scarce a thought.

But my Lady of Devon was of different mettle. To her this arrival of a strange lady was an event in her quiet life. She ordered an apartment made ready adjoining her own chamber; she carefully selected from her maidens several to attend upon her guest; and she made every arrangement that occurred to her active mind, lest aught should be lacking for Anne's comfort. Then she prepared chambers for the Prince and his party, commanded the servants to be in readiness to give him a royal welcome, and ordered pigs to be roasted, fowls to be dressed, and quantities of rich viands and pastry to be cooked, while the most delicious wines were secured to accompany the food. It was only when the great, gloomy castle, built by William the Conqueror himself, had fairly been transformed

into a place of revelry and merry-making, that Lady Eleanor had leisure to indulge in curious and anxious thoughts. Would the Lady Anne find pleasure in her welcome, or would she despise the efforts of her hostess? Would she be content with a quiet, country life, or would she miss the gaieties of the court and be restless and dissatisfied? Above all, would she be gentle and sweet and simple,—a companion and a friend to her future sister,—or would she, as was far more likely, be cold and haughty, proud and selfish, and dressed in jewels and the richest gowns? "Oh," the little lady mused, "how then could we live together peacefully? For, by my faith, methinks that I would hate her!" These doubts had reached their height, when the sound of hoofs, the lowering of the drawbridge, and the hearty cheers of the servants proclaimed the arrival of the expected guests.

The earl, dressed in a rich crimson suit, and wearing many jewels, with his countess robed in a simple and yet rich gown of black velvet, her long train edged with ermine, immediately proceeded to the great hall, where, surrounded by their esquires and ladies, all gorgeously attired, they awaited the approach of their guests, who had gone to their chambers to don more suitable apparel. Presently the doors were opened and the Prince, who had discarded his armor for an exquisite suit of cream-colored satin, attended by Arundel in green silk, and by De la Pole in deep purple velvet, came slowly

forward with Lady Stafford on his arm. So hasty had been her flight and so hurried her journey, that she was obliged to appear in the same white robes in which she had expected to take the veil. But nothing else could so well have served to display her beauty; for moving forward with quiet dignity, her head held erect, her rich golden hair falling like a mist around her shoulders, and mingling with the graceful folds of her gown, she was as charming a picture of girlish loveliness as the old hall of Rougemont had ever held. Lady Eleanor's heart went out to her at once; and while her husband formally greeted the noblemen, she held out both hands to Anne, drew her near and kissed her on each cheek.

"Maiden," she said gently, "thou art welcome to Rougemont, and that thou mayst spend many and happy hours here, is my earnest wish."

"I thank thee, Lady Devon," answered Anne heartily; "may God bless thee for the shelter thou dost offer to a homeless maiden."

A merry evening was that first one in Exeter. The great tables were laden with good cheer, the bowl circled freely, and the earl's minstrels delighted the ear with their charming music. Shortly before the ladies rose to seek their apartments for the night, a little incident occurred which charmed both high and low. The boisterous merriment of the retainers had somewhat subsided, for they had drunk freely of the wine and were a trifle drowsy,

the musicians had changed their songs from gay to sad, and tuned their harps to minor strains. A certain melancholy seemed to be settling upon guests and hosts alike, when the Prince, rising from his place, called for a harp, and amid the sudden and intense silence raised his voice in a dainty love song in honor of the Lady Anne. Silvery clear, but very soft at first, sounded the words; then as he entered more into the theme the voice increased in depth and fulness, swelling higher and higher until the black rafters rang with sound and sent back a throbbing echo. Harry had forgotten himself and his surroundings—before his eyes there moved that sweet face which he had never seen and yet which had awakened in him so strong a love, and to her he sang, pouring out his heart in melody, that he might lay it at her very feet. Those who heard it never forgot that song, and there were several who marvelled at it greatly. But Anne had guessed before, that he did love, and when she bade him good-night and farewell, for he was to leave the castle at break of day, she looked into his eyes and murmured softly:

"My lord, thou hast given me love and happiness by thy great kindness to my Lord of March. 'Tis by thy favor we can live and hope. May God reward thee by granting unto thee a wife whom thou canst love with all thy heart."

"Thou hast read my secret," he answered quietly, "Edmund alone doth know the truth of it, and one

day thou shalt hear it from his lips. Whether it be God's purpose to bless me thus, I know not, but methinks it may not be. Yet, maiden, I thank thee for thy happy wish. God bless thee and guard thee in his loving care."

CHAPTER XXII.

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us."

KING LEAR.

A BUSY and eventful summer had passed over England. Prince Thomas had been made Duke of Clarence in July, and throughout the eight months from January to August he had presided over the council, and had filled the honored place at court; while it was chiefly owing to his influence that a treaty had been concluded with the Duke of Orleans in May. And now, the autumn found him already in France in command of a force of eight thousand men, and each post brought news of his capture of fresh towns from the Burgundians while *en route* to join Orleans at Bourges. Meantime the English council, at the head of which the youthful Prince John had quietly and gravely taken his place, was united in firmly supporting their absent Prince and the new policy he had negotiated. Thomas's victories filled England with enthusiasm, and even the King, ill though he was, took a keen interest in events and was delighted at the success of this second treaty, since that made with the Burgundians had so miserably failed.

During all these interesting events he who was most fitted for the high duties of statesmanship, whose wisdom and skill in council had for so many

years been of inestimable value to his country, he who was still regarded as the future king, had not only been denied the smallest share in the government, but had been allowed to remain in ignorance of everything pertaining to it, until such time as the entire country should learn of it.

Harry of Monmouth was a proud man, and the distrust of him, so long continued, cut him to the heart. He was, moreover, exceedingly anxious over his father's health, and he was deeply troubled that he could not go to him, or even receive accurate reports of his condition. Once, in the spring, when the monarch was staying at Windsor, the Prince had passed near; and learning that his father was much worse, had gone to the castle and sought admission. An officer of the guard advanced from out the tower, and informed Harry, across the open moat, that while the King remained there he could not be received. The Prince flushed hotly, wheeled his horse and galloped off so rapidly that his attendants had much difficulty in overtaking him; and ever afterward he had been careful to avoid that part of the country where he knew his father to be at the time. Greatly as he suffered from his unfortunate and embarrassing position, he hid his wounds under a smiling face, and scarcely one of those who witnessed the zest with which he entered into all sports and contests of skill, or enjoyed his merry jests at dinner, imagined that his heart was filled with sorrow.

His visit to London in July had been a brief but merry one, and to none, even among his intimates —for so Falstaff and his companions were regarded —did the idea occur that Harry's sudden departure could be in any way connected with the mysterious disappearance of Lady Anne Stafford. True, the events occurred upon the same day, but the lady had been brought into the city, while Harry had left it to travel from place to place, as was the custom in those restless days. It was not known that Arundel or De la Pole had dined at Cold Harbor; for the Prince, fearing the knowledge of their presence with him would still more prejudice the court against them, had carefully guarded the fact, and when the two young men returned from Exeter they separated and quietly went to their own estates.

Lady Stafford had sent message after message to Sir Michael entreating him to come to her, or at least to send her more definite information regarding her daughter; but the knight was too cautious to think of journeying to Stafford and placing himself in his aunt's power, and his replies assured the countess of Anne's welfare, but impressed upon her the hopelessness of endeavoring to find her, so that at last the anxious mother gave up in despair and resolved to wait until events gave her some clue.

Thus the incident was almost forgotten when Harry of Monmouth returned to London in the late autumn, to be joyfully welcomed by his merry friends. The long, useless summer, the scornful in-

difference and even insults to which he had been subjected on occasional chance meetings with members of the court, and the apparent hopelessness of any immediate change in his position, had so discouraged the Prince that he was glad to throw himself heart and soul into whatever pleasure London could afford; and it is little to be wondered at if he felt that Falstaff, Poins, and Bardolph were his true and only friends. To escape from his own gloomy thoughts, he spent his waking hours almost entirely in their society; he shared eagerly in whatever revels they proposed, and although he was careful to avoid transgression of the law, and continued to restore, as far as possible, from his own exceedingly limited funds, whatever money they took from travellers, yet he grew to regard their occasional offences far more leniently, and to shield them from the rigor of the law.

Such a condition of affairs did not escape the watchful eyes of those who sought to injure the Prince by every possible method, and the stories which were told about him were so exaggerated and represented such an alarming situation, that even those at court who loved him best were forced to believe that the reports were founded upon truth, while others demanded that he be stripped of his titles, attainted and banished from the kingdom.

Public gossip, far more than Harry's own acts, had caused such an increase of crime of all kinds—since every evil-doer claimed that the Prince would

protect him in case of need—as to make it evident that some strong, bold action was necessary to force obedience of the law. Fortunately for England, the man then occupying the exalted position of chief justice of the King's Bench was strong, absolutely fearless, and so high-minded and upright that he allowed nothing whatever to prevent him from doing his entire duty.

Sir William Gascoigne had heard with distress the tales of the Prince's ungoverned life. Nearly two years before, when Harry Monmouth had first shown his pleasure in the society of these mischievous men, the judge had not hesitated to express his concern thereat; and now, during the last month, it seemed that his worst fears had become realities. Something must be done, and that quickly, or lawlessness would reign supreme. With a boldness and scorn of evil consequences for himself which render him worthy of the highest admiration, Gascoigne struck at the very heart of the matter.

A traveller had appeared before one of the lesser judges to demand redress. He had been robbed of two pounds and a cloak. It so happened that the cloak was of a peculiar appearance, and a full description of it being given, men were despatched to search for the offender. Before many hours had passed, the lost property was discovered in the possession of Bardolph, one of the Prince's dearest friends. The officers dared not arrest such a man, and the judge himself hesitated when they reported

it; but Gascoigne heard of the matter, and resolving to make an example of one robber, promptly sent a large body of men, heavily armed, with commands to bring the transgressor to the bench at once, and he himself would try the case.

They proceeded to one of the inns in Eastcheap, and there found Harry dining with much merriment, and attended by half a dozen friends, Bardolph among them. They forced their entrance so hurriedly, that those within had no warning until they found themselves surrounded by twice their number. The Prince sprang to his feet, demanding angrily,—

"Now, sirrahs, what means this intrusion? May I not dine in peace without such interruptions? Why come ye here?"

"Your pardon, my lord," answered the sheriff. "We are commanded by the judge to bring Master Bardolph before him without delay."

"For what offence?"

"Upon the charge of robbery, my lord."

The Prince made an impatient movement. "Well, be it so. If he is guilty, he shall come to-morrow to answer to it. Ye have my word as pledge, so pray depart."

"Impossible, my lord," replied the sheriff firmly, "he must come with us now. We can take no denial."

The Prince's eyes blazed, but he controlled his anger. "Be it so. We will all come with you! Jack,

Poins, Gadshill, prepare ye and come on. Bardolph, thou needst have no fear. I will answer for thee."

The officers dared not object, so the entire party prepared to start, when Harry asked,—"Before what judge does he appear?"

When he had heard the answer, he looked a little troubled. Gascoigne was not a man to trifle with. A sudden resolution came to him.

"Jack and Ned, mount and come with me. The rest of ye ride on with Bardolph. We will follow shortly."

And riding hastily to Cold Harbor, the Prince donned a rich suit more suited to his rank, and when he came forth to begin the journey, he was surrounded by an extensive guard of men-at-arms. As they rode rapidly up the Strand, Harry suddenly remembered that his last journey to Westminster was on that occasion when he suffered dismissal from the court and the council, and this remembrance by no means relieved his present anxiety, although he would not permit his thoughts to dwell upon it. He knew that crime had greatly increased of late, and he had cause to fear that Gascoigne would not be lenient toward a convicted wrongdoer—he knew well that Bardolph was guilty.

The trial was in progress, and with confident assurance that he would escape, the prisoner had even admitted his guilt, when, amid great excitement, the doors were thrown open, and the Prince entered and advanced toward the seat of justice. He was

dressed in an elegant costume of delicate yellow satin, the doublet slashed and exhibiting the white ruffled linen, his limbs clad in white silk hose, and a long cape lined with white satin falling from his shoulders to the floor, while upon his head rested the golden coronet of the Prince of Wales. His men-at-arms placed themselves about the entrance, and the officers of the court glanced at them with evident apprehension, for they were outnumbered.

Gascoigne rose to his feet and came forward to the edge of the dais—a noble and majestic figure, very tall, his rich scarlet robes falling in graceful folds about him, and his strong face calm and dispassionate.

"What is your will, my lord, that you come here?" he asked quietly.

Harry bowed slightly, as if in greeting, and answered,—

"The prisoner, sir, is my good friend. I pray to know for what offence he has been brought before you?"

"For the offence, my lord, of taking from yon traveller a cloak, found in his possession, and the sum of two pounds."

The judge's face was calm, his manner courteous.

Harry hesitated a moment, then asked: "Does he deny the charge?"

"No, my lord, he admits his guilt."

The Prince turned toward the man. "Bardolph, where is the cloak?"

"Yonder, my lord; master traveller has it again."

"Hast returned the money likewise?"

"Nay, that were folly. Besides, 'tis spent for sack," answered the prisoner with a grin.

The Prince drew forth his purse, and taking from it one pound and fifteen shillings extended the money to the judge, saying with a smile,—"Sir William, my purse contains no more than this, but if you will make up the rest to this worthy man, I promise that you shall receive it from me within a fortnight."

Gascoigne accepted the money and the traveller received the full sum and left the court content. Then spoke the Prince.

"Sir, prithee set free the prisoner without delay, that we may return to London."

There was an instant's intense silence, then the judge answered very calmly: "Not so, my lord. Although he that was robbed is satisfied, yet justice and the law have been imperilled and must receive their due. Yonder man must go to prison until the King's pleasure give him freedom."

Harry was amazed. He had never before encountered such a stern idea of justice. "You jest, sir," he exclaimed. "That which was taken has been given back,—surely the demands of the law are fully satisfied? There is no reason for this severity!"

"If such is your idea of justice, Prince, your judgment is less keen than it once was. I say again, the man shall go to prison."

Harry flushed, and feeling himself to be in the wrong, answered somewhat angrily: "You have spoken, sir; I came not to bandy words with you, but now, as Prince of Wales, heir to the throne, I command that this prisoner be pardoned and placed at liberty."

A slight color came to the justice's cheeks, and a swift glance around made him realize how few his officers were beside so many guardsmen, yet he answered fearlessly:

"Your Grace has no power to pardon a prisoner of this court. If you desire the freedom of your gallant friend, go to the King, your father, and obtain from him a formal pardon; pending which the prisoner shall spend his time in the jail."

Thus defied, Harry turned and motioned to his guard. "Set free the prisoner!" he cried, but instantly the officers surrounded Bardolph and raised their weapons. Furious, the Prince advanced upon the justice with flashing eyes and his hand upon his sword. All present in the court room, the sheriff and his men, the hesitating guard beside the door, and the eager crowd of people who had assembled to witness the trial, watched the two chief actors in this drama with breathless interest,—would Harry strike, would there be even murder done before their eyes?

But Gascoigne, although fully realizing his personal danger, and knowing the probable results of what he intended, yet stood unmoved, his head erect,

his face calm and fearless, and as Harry advanced he raised his hand and pointed toward him, crying,—

"Prince, thou forgettest the majesty of England's law. I stand here for the King, thy sovereign lord and father, and in my person represent his greatness. When thou dost offer insults to me, thou dost aim at law and order, the root of England's might. And thou hast aimed at it," he continued, his voice ringing boldly forth, "ay, and struck it too. Thou dost spend thy days in drinking and thy nights in brawling—we learn thou dost not even scruple to give thy aid to those who rob innocent travellers; and under thine protection crime has so increased that soon, methinks, there can be neither law nor justice within our England. And to-night thou comest in person to rob the law of its victim—to set at liberty a thief and drunkard, and thou proclaimest him to be THY FRIEND. Oh, shame upon thee! Art thou Prince of Wales? Our country blushes at the thought of it! I charge thee, in the King's name, cease this wildness; control thy passions, and give such an example to those who shall in future be thy subjects, that they shall not feel shame to follow thee. And now," he added sternly, "for thy contempt and disobedience, that thou hast sought to free by force a prisoner from his just bondage, go thou to the prison of the King's Bench, whereunto I commit thee, and remain there until the pleasure of the King, thy father, shall be known."

The spectators had quite forgotten to breathe. Every eye had been fixed upon the justice during this amazing speech, and now all quickly turned toward Harry Monmouth—was it possible his sword was still undrawn?

The Prince had at first been too astonished at Gascoigne's boldness to attempt an interruption, but as he proceeded and Harry heard himself denounced in open court for faults that he had been so careful to avoid, he was first bewildered, then, in spite of his innocence, deeply ashamed; and now, in the intense silence, he stood with bowed head and white face, striving to realize how keenly Englishmen must have suffered since they supposed the heir to the throne to be so evil a man as this! A brief instant he struggled with his thoughts, then suddenly becoming conscious of Gascoigne's command, he quietly drew his sword, and sinking on one knee, placed it in the justice's hand in token of his submission; then, without a glance at friends or guardsmen, he turned promptly to the sheriff, and said humbly:

"Lead on, I am ready to accompany you."

The sheriff glanced in amazement at Gascoigne, but in response to a gesture of command, called three attendants to his side, and in a moment the little party had passed from the court room, and with the Prince of Wales in their midst were riding rapidly to London.

The heir to England's throne—the future king—had yielded to the majesty of law.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure."
SHELLEY.

EVEN during those stirring days at home and abroad, men forgot the Orleans alliance and ceased to talk of the latest victories. When they gathered in taverns or upon street corners, one topic alone was eagerly discussed—"Hast heard about Prince Hal and the Judge Gascoigne?" The story spread like wildfire over London, and rich and poor, high and low, received it with bewilderment increasing to amazement, incredulity, slowly becoming belief, and ending in admiration and delight. The general verdict was unanimous: "Did I not tell ye he was a noble prince? By my troth, could I but see the man who spread such lies about him!—"

The English people had indeed suffered at the thought of Harry's supposed misdeeds, and after the long months of sadness and dismay, they were prompt to seize upon this glimpse of a noble spirit and to behold in it a prophecy of happier days to come. The utter confusion of those criminals that had hoped for protection from one who submitted his own person to the law, gave the judges courage to follow Gascoigne's example and take prompt and decided action, and the effect was visible at once in

the increase of order and general safety within the city.

One of the most interesting features of the situation was the probable effect of the incident upon the King; and the chief justice himself was not without anxiety upon this subject. Although confident that he had but done his duty, he yet knew that his act was without precedent, and not only did he expect dismissal and punishment upon the accession of the Prince, but he feared that Henry IV. himself would take his office from him for daring to deal so severely with one of the royal blood. It so happened that the King had returned to Westminster Palace, and when the astonished guardsmen saw their master led to prison they hurriedly left the court and sought his royal father to tell him, in tones of trembling excitement, of "the outrageous insults put upon our Prince!" The monarch listened in astonishment to the recital, then sat for a moment speechless, the full meaning of the incident gradually dawning upon him, until when a courtier asked: "What doth your Highness think of such bold conduct?" he turned upon them all a countenance so filled with joy and gratitude that they were amazed, and answered clearly,—

"Methinks that God hath blessed me very greatly, for he hath given me a judge so brave and true that dares to justly punish mine own son; nor am I less blessed in that this son of mine will so submit the

greatness of his blood unto the law and justice of our country."

Although the hour was growing late, the King commanded two of his lords to go at once to the King's Bench Prison and order the Prince's release. "For 'twould be villainous that England's heir should sleep in a common jail!"

He now summoned the Earl of Warwick to his presence. "Hast thou heard about our son, Richard?"

The earl bowed. "But even now the news hath reached mine ear."

"Dost thou not think, my lord, that Harry is misjudged? By my troth, such a man as we have thought him would have slain Gascoigne a score of times ere he'd submit."

"Your Highness knows," answered the earl proudly, "that I, for one, have ever believed him guiltless. To-day my trust in him hath been truly proven."

"Thou art right, Richard, and although my doubts still cloud my mind, yet for the obedience he hath shown to-day I will at least allow him explanation. I prithee go, my lord, and make it known throughout the palace that if the Prince of Wales request an audience, it is our pleasure that he be admitted."

But nothing was farther from Harry Monmouth's thoughts than to seek an interview with his royal

father. Not one word did he address to the sheriff or his companions during that rapid ride back to London, through the city and over London Bridge. Even when they reached Southwark and, galloping up High Street, drew rein before the great, gloomy prison, whose grim walls spoke eloquently of the misery within,—even then the Prince seemed to be entirely oblivious to his surroundings. He dismounted like one in a dream, looking neither to the right nor left, but mechanically followed his guard through the portal. He neither saw the curious, amazed glances cast upon him nor heeded the low-voiced conversation between the sheriff and the wardens, but followed obediently wheresoever they led him until he found himself alone in a small cell arranged for the temporary occupation of distinguished prisoners, most of whom were either promptly executed or taken to the Tower.

The clanging of the bolts behind the departing officers aroused Harry from his revery. He started, and gave a swift glance around the chamber. In the light of one flickering torch he noted the thick stone walls, the low ceiling, the uneven floor, the high barred window from which came a faint gleam of twilight. The torch was fastened upon a rude stone bench, which was the only furniture. In one corner was a mass of straw and upon it a heavy blanket. There were a few dirty rushes upon the floor, and near the door a mug of cold water stood, beside it a plate of food, which the warden had left for his

illustrious prisoner. As these details became visible to Harry's eyes, a curious, grim smile came to his lips. "Truly," he murmured, "a fit abiding place for the most royal prince, Harry of Wales!"—and raising his hand, he removed from his head the golden coronet which he had still retained. The torch flickered upon the jewels and sent straight flashing gleams around the gloomy cell. Harry stood a moment, his eyes fixed upon the symbol of his rank, then he placed it upon the bench, and drawing his rich cloak about him, sank upon the straw and lay motionless, intent upon his thoughts. How long he remained thus he knew not, but on a sudden the bolts were drawn back, the heavy door was opened, and the glare of many torches filled the room with light. Harry sprang up as the warden advanced, saying respectfully: "My lord, the King, your father, bids us set you free."

The Prince bowed with a certain haughtiness, replaced the golden circlet on his head, and followed him. In the courtyard he found the royal messengers, who started when they saw his costume, and greeted him with the utmost deference. Harry did not reply, save by a bow, but promptly mounted his horse; and there was something in his face that prevented them from addressing him during the journey.

On arriving at Cold Harbor, the Prince drew rein. "My lords, I thank you for your escort; farewell!" and before they could find a suitable reply

he had ridden within and the gates were shut behind him.

Of course the events of the night were known to every one within the mansion. Such of Harry's own guard as had not gone to the King returned within the hour to tell their fellows all that had taken place, enlarging the tale with picturesque additions. The utmost excitement reigned. Their lord sent to prison like a common thief! England's heir, the best-beloved, the hope of the nation, to await within a dungeon the King's pleasure! Would not his father welcome joyfully the chance to keep him in confinement? Over their cups, the crowds of soldiers and servants discussed the situation in deep voices, intense with eager feeling. "Oh, if ye had but seen 't!" one of the witnesses was saying. "He called to us to free the prisoner, and then up sprang the sheriff's men to guard him, and while we stood, uncertain what to do, Harry Monmouth comes up to the justice and strikes him such a blow o' the cheek—" "Peace, with thy lies," cries out another, "he never struck him!" "How, thou fat villain, have I no eyes? Can I not see what lies before mine hand?" "Thou didst never see Harry Monmouth strike a blow, I warrant!" "An' I did not, call me rogue!" "Thou art a rogue without the calling!" "Hold!" cried another, "prithee, on with the tale. What happened after?" The two guardsmen contented themselves with glaring at each other for a space, then he of the free wagging tongue went on:

"My lord chief justice frowned at Prince Hal until his face was black as a starless night, then says he,—'Thou scurvy rascal, thou thief and drunkard!' "—"He never dared!" cried a chorus in great excitement.

After this there was no possibility of calm. High and low, the steward and the meanest servant, the commander and the humblest soldier were mingled in one great mass of men swaying back and forth throughout the hall, hissing Gascoigne's name, and breaking out into delighted cheers at each new plan for rescue or revenge. Those guardsmen who had weakly allowed their lord and master to be taken from them, without one blow in his defence, were roundly scored, and only their vivid descriptions of their helpless amazement, and the rapidity of the Prince's departure, served to pacify the general wrath against them.

At a later hour, came those who had seen the King, bringing the joyful news that the prisoner would be speedily released. Scarcely had they comprehended these tidings—and many were still incredulous about them—when they heard the cheers of the men-at-arms at the gate, and a moment later Harry was himself in the midst of them. They crowded forward to welcome their beloved master with every expression of joy and relief, but at sight of his face the cheers died upon their lips. Harry was very pale, and as he gazed at them, they saw the grief and shame which filled his heart. He

waved them back and raised his hand for silence, then asked brokenly:

"Is it thus, men, that ye receive me when I come back to ye, disgraced? Will ye welcome the thief and brawler and cheer the protector of criminals? I have this day been branded in open court as a law-breaker and evil liver! Will ye greet such a man as your Prince? Nay, rather, go to the King and tell him ye will no longer serve his ignoble son. At day-break I leave London. If there be any among my soldiers who would still follow Harry Monmouth—but not the Prince of Wales—let them prepare to follow me. For the rest of you, I thank you for your many years of faithful service and I shall not forget your love for me. Be it your charge, steward, to see that every man receives his due, and whatsoever remaineth after all are satisfied, take thereof for thine own purposes and divide the rest amongst them. When all are gone, bar the gates and depart. Ye have heard. I bid you all farewell."

Amazed and troubled they parted before him, and as he passed, more than one rough hand sought to brush away the unaccustomed moisture from eager eyes, and more than one voice trembled over a "God bless thee." The Prince made no attempt to hide the tears that well-nigh blinded him, but hurried from the hall to his own chamber, there to spend the night in bitter thoughts.

When finally the first faint beams of daylight entered his high window Harry rose hurriedly, clad

himself in his plainest garments, made his few necessary preparations, and descended to the great hall. Only half a score of men-at-arms were there, but they had provided food for him, and the exhausted Prince gladly partook of it. He ate hurriedly and in absolute silence, then bade them bring the roan mare to the courtyard. He lingered for a moment, looking his last upon the place where he had spent many of his happiest hours. The blackened rafters spoke eloquently of the merry feasts that had been prepared beneath them; the great oaken walls had echoed the jests and songs. Upon yon dais had sat many of the noblest men in England—the Beauforts, Scrope, Earl Arundel, and Suffolk and his son, Westmoreland and Warwick, the learned Courtenay, Carpenter, and Rudborn, the poets Lydgate and Occleve, and above all his brothers—Thomas, now winning England's battles, and John, presiding over England's council. Ay, the day had been when these two had been proud and happy to sit upon Harry's right and left, and greet him as their host and noble lord. Oh, the merriment of those bygone days—the jests, the songs, the free-flowing bowl! And one night, when a rich feast was spread, and the guests were of the noblest in the land, Gascoigne had been among them—ay, Gascoigne! and he had sat upon the dais there and entered heartily into the gay life, and even jested and joined in a merry song, and had been proud to sup with the Prince of Wales. And last

night that same royal host had bent his knee before his one-time guest and received from his lips a rating, the remembrance of which brought the crimson to his cheeks. Was he, indeed, awake? Could it be true? Was he condemned before the world for faults which made his people blush to think of him? Torn by a thousand bitter, cruel thoughts, Harry threw his riding cloak about him, gave one final, longing look around the hall, then slowly passed the door, never to return, and leaving behind him the free and happy life which was henceforth to be a memory alone.

Resolutely putting the past behind him, and striving to forget there was a future, he hurried to the courtyard; but in the doorway stopped and gazed around him in amazement. Nearest him stood an esquire holding his beautiful mare, but behind were scores upon scores of horses, crowding every inch of open space, and a man mounted upon each. As the Prince appeared every one bared his head and bowed low in the saddle. Harry's quick eyes noted that all seemed prepared for a long journey, and he demanded hastily: "What means this, sirs, why are ye here?"

"My lord," answered the steward, who sat his horse near by, "you gave permission to those who would follow you to assemble here at daybreak. They are here, my lord, and not one man is missing!"

The color flamed into the Prince's cheeks, a glad

light flashed to his eyes, but he answered quickly,—"This must not be! Would ye follow a man disgraced?"

"Ay, we would follow," came the deep chorus of two hundred voices.

"Bethink ye, I have neither gold nor place. Even to my ears have come the rumors that I shall be attainted and exiled from the land! Now, truly, there will be no delay. Would ye follow a penniless fugitive?"

"We follow," came back the answer.

"To exile?" demanded Harry sternly.

"Ay, to hell!" cried a deep voice. And the two hundred echoed, "Ay, to hell!"

"Come, then," answered the Prince; and with cheers that rent the air they rode after him out between the gates, and with never a backward look or a faltering heart followed him joyfully past the city walls, not knowing and not caring whither they were bound since Harry Monmouth led them on their way.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"For who, alas! has lived,
Nor in the watches of the night recalled
Words he has wished unsaid and deeds undone?"
ROGERS.

"MY lords, the time has come for us to act." It was the Baron Scrope who spoke—the royal treasurer addressing the English council which had assembled in one of the chambers of Westminster. The King, being in better health than for many weeks, was present in person; at his right hand sat Prince John, who, in spite of his extreme youth, was so grave and thoughtful that he was judged to be exceeding wise and entirely worthy of his high place. At the King's left was Archbishop Arundel, the chancellor; while Westmoreland, Warwick, Scrope and Stanley made up their number—Gascoigne, being engaged upon the bench, did not appear. It was the beginning of December, and only three days after the Prince's arrest. That event was still eagerly discussed, and no one felt surprised that it should be alluded to in council. For several months, indeed since Harry's dismissal from their midst, many of the King's advisers had advocated a petition to Parliament, begging it to declare Thomas of Clarence heir apparent. The archbishop, ably seconded by Stanley and Gascoigne, was espe-

cially eager; and Scrope had, with much display of reluctance, and—"for the good of the nation"—joined his voice to theirs. It was what he most desired; for he felt that Harry's banishment would make his personal triumph complete, and to-day he believed that his time had come.

"Ye know, my lords," he said quietly, "that England's king must be the noblest of the royal house. It was for this reason that we decreed the retirement of Richard, and in his place seated the Duke of Hereford on the throne." He bowed low to the King as he spoke, and Henry smiled slightly. "We love Prince Harry well, but we cannot deny that he has many faults. While we trusted in his reformation we stayed our hand; but now his sins have forced my lord chief justice to punish him like any common lawbreaker. Methinks this act must force us to decision."

Arundel glanced at the King's troubled face with a grim smile. "Do you hesitate, my liege?"

Henry did not meet his eyes, but answered slowly: "I would the boy might answer to the charges. I cannot think that he is beyond repentance."

The archbishop laughed scornfully.—"My lord," he said, "you were ever too merciful. Your Highness's son is known to drink and swagger; he has been charged with theft, and it is proven that he is ever ready to protect a criminal. Think you that

Englishmen will obey and reverence a king who was committed to the jail?"

"His very yielding proves a nobler spirit," cried Warwick hastily.

"This is odd reasoning, sir," replied Arundel; "thou then proclaimest thy fondness for a milksop —a feeble coward, who dares not strike a blow in his own defence! Suppose that I should bid him hang himself! Wouldst thou not love him an' he did obey me?"

"My lord, thy argument is none too wise," began the Earl of Westmoreland coldly. "Hast no respect for the ancient laws of England?"

Arundel bit his lip. "Thou dost not understand, Neville," he said,—but the earl cut him short. "I understand thy hatred of Harry Monmouth, and that thou desirest Thomas for Prince of Wales, nor do I think that thou art in the wrong; but I will not have thee use false arguments."

The archbishop flushed. "If thou canst prove to me that it was false—"

"Hearken, then, and thou shalt have the proof," answered Neville promptly. "Is not the Parliament more mighty than the King? Nay, I am guilty of no disrespect, his Highness will acknowledge the truth of it."

"Ay, cousin," answered Henry smoothly, "thou art right. Proceed then to thy further argument."

Westmoreland gave a triumphant glance around

him, and continued impressively: "What is the highest duty of Parliament? To make the laws whereby our land is governed. Our safety and our welfare alike depend upon prompt obedience to these laws. Therefore, when our Prince submitted his own person to the decrees of justice, he showed a spirit of humility that doth belong unto the noblest minds. Art answered, lord archbishop? Art content?"

Arundel shrugged his shoulders and smiled coldly. "Thou arguest well, Neville, and eloquently. Wilt thou proceed and prove the Prince a hero? Wilt thou deny the charges made against him?"

"I will deny that he is *proven* guilty!" came the bold answer.

Henry looked up quickly. "My lord, I thank thee for thy confidence. Methinks my hope is stronger than before."

Arundel was alarmed. Could it be that their plan was to fail at the last moment? He rose to his feet, with rapid speech,—"Sire, I trust you will not carelessly deny the favor that we ask. Were your Highness's eldest son a noble man, no heart would throb more joyously than mine; but he is proven dissolute and false. Methinks you do forget his conspiracy against your royal person!"

The King sighed and bowed his head. This was indeed a fact and not a rumor. Arundel saw his advantage and hurried on:

"His life has, during the past year, been filled with brawls and midnight robberies, and his presence before Gascoigne proved that he did delight to shield a felon from the law's revenge. You have not forgot the charges made against him of using the funds intended for Calais—"

"That charge was proven false," cried Warwick sharply.

Arundel laughed. "Ay, two soldiers in the Prince's pay have so declared! My lord, thou art too hasty in thy love. Sire," he continued gravely, "these stains upon Prince Harry's name seem ample reason for his banishment. His base conspiracy against yourself is worthy of the punishment of death. You have been very gentle with his faults, and by your kindness only spurred him on. Yet were this all, I would not urge you thus, but he has brought upon us ridicule and shame by the ill-advised alliance with Duke John. He's shown, methinks, he cannot govern wisely. As for my Lord Prince Thomas, Duke of Clarence, his life is pure; his virtues are unquestioned; he has ever been a true and loyal son, and he has proved his wisdom in the council and now displays his valor on the field. Parliament would joyfully proclaim him heir. My lord, we do not seek for Harry's death, but simply for his peaceful banishment. He shall receive a suitable allowance and doubtless foreign monarchs will receive him. Do with him as you will, my noble lord, but grant that Thomas may be Prince of Wales."

A troubled silence followed, while the King considered all the arguments used to convince him. Then, glancing slowly from one face to another, he spoke: "We've heard the pleasure of my lord archbishop, but we would know what every one desireth. Lord Scrope of Masham, thou hast urged his exile."

"Ay, sire," answered the baron promptly. "When Harry Monmouth sought your Highness's death I was convinced my love had been misplaced. I cannot root all feeling from my heart, but for my country's welfare I ask his punishment."

A slight smile played about Arundel's lips, but Warwick glanced at Westmoreland and frowned—the brave and chivalrous earl loved the Prince well, and instinctively distrusted Baron Scrope. Henry glanced toward Stanley,—"What sayest thou, Sir John?"

The knight replied unhesitatingly, "Harry must be banished and Prince Thomas declared the heir."

"And thou, my son of Lancaster, what dost thou wish?" the King demanded. Every eye was turned upon the lad sitting so silently and gravely among these older men. For which brother would he give his influence? In his heart Henry hoped for a spirited defence of the accused Prince,—if Thomas himself had been present the debate would have ended swiftly. But John replied with stately condescension: "My brother Harry loves me well, my liege; I cannot speak against him."

The King flashed an indignant glance at him, and

as he saw Arundel's satisfaction, he exclaimed in angry disappointment,—"It seems thy love for Harry scarcely equals that which he has ever shown for thee. Hast thou no word to speak in his defence?"

John looked mildly surprised. "Methought that 'twas a sacrifice of duty unto love merely to hold my peace. What possible defence could I advance? If I said aught, my conscience would impel me to urge his banishment, and this I will not do!"

The King frowned deeply. "'Tis well that thou art silent, oh, virtuous son!" he exclaimed with scorn; and amid the suppressed laughter of Scrope and the chancellor he turned, almost in despair, and addressed those two who had not yet declared their final purpose. "My lords of Westmoreland and Warwick, ye have both freely expressed your love for Harry and for me. What say ye—shall we banish him from England?"

They gazed at each other, troubled and doubtful; then Neville answered for them both. "Sire," he said, "we chiefly do desire the highest good for England, and we suggest that the Prince of Wales receive a free and impartial trial upon the charges that are brought against him. We do both hope and verily believe that he will be found entirely innocent; but if he's proven guilty, banish him."

The King rested his head upon his hand and seemed to be gazing into the gloomy future. At last he answered slowly: "Methinks that I must bend

unto your will. Cousin Neville, a trial were worse than useless, the proof against him is too strong for hope, and I do certainly believe him guilty of evil living, protection of criminals and the desire for my throne and life. His trial could only be a public disgrace, and I will not submit him to this shame. For, lords, in my last weary hours of life, methinks I love this wayward son of mine. 'Tis nigh a year since I did see his face and I do often hunger for his presence. Therefore, my lords, I would be gentle with him, yet I must yield my love unto my duty. Now, hearken! If—"

A sudden rap upon the door was followed by the entrance of a horseman, splashed with mud, and breathless with hard riding, who came swiftly forward and, kneeling, presented to the King a packet. Henry's face brightened. "Ha! Art from France?"

"Ay, my lord," the messenger answered. "The Duke of Clarence commends him to your Highness and bade me bring these letters with all speed."

The King rose to his feet and held aloft the packet, saying impressively: "Lords, my decision will not be delayed, for here I hold the fate of Harry Monmouth! If, when I break these seals I find within the tidings of present or swift-coming victory, then shall the Prince be banished from the land and Thomas be acknowledged as the future king. If I do find defeat, then as I live, Harry shall continue Prince of Wales!"

With fingers that trembled in their eagerness he

opened the letters. Every eye was on him; every man leaned forward and waited breathlessly for the final word. He read, and his eyes grew wide with amazement; he clutched the sheets and his breath came in quick gasps; wonder and bewilderment grew upon his face; then suddenly he brought his hand down upon the great table near him with such force that one would have thought a crash of thunder sounded, and raising his head, he exclaimed defiantly: "By Heaven, but I have won against ye all!" Then turning swiftly to Lord Warwick, he cried out,—"My lord, begone, and mount thy swiftest steed! Ride with thy might to London—to Cold Harbor! Say to the Prince our sentence is revoked; we do forget what evil he has done, and have remembrance only for his virtues. It is our pleasure he attend upon us within the hour. Tell him we are in council and have sore need of his long-proven wisdom. He shall receive his own exalted place. Stay not to question—go with speed, my lord!"

"Your Grace is mad!" cried the archbishop hotly, and thought to keep the earl from departure, but Warwick swiftly passed him and was gone.

With amazement and alarm upon their faces the councillors pressed forward, demanding an explanation. The King thrust the letters toward them, and they seized them frantically and struggled for their possession. So great was the confusion and bewilderment that it was not until the sands of the glass had run a quarter of their course that all were ac-

quainted with the contents of the duke's last message, and when they knew it, they could only gaze at one another in blank dismay. Arundel, proud and self-reliant, could not conceal the pallor of his cheek, and the King saw and rejoiced that this powerful, arrogant man had received a severe blow. The cause was told very simply in Thomas's letters, and amplified by the messenger's statements. In substance it was briefly this—that England had been made a catspaw to pull chestnuts out of the fire! Her army had been used to capture numerous towns from the Burgundians, and then the rival powers had peacefully concluded an alliance, and under an agreement, made on the 14th of November, Clarence had been offered a small sum of money, and forced to withdraw with his army to Guienne. In short, the Orleans alliance had been abruptly terminated; and whereas England had withdrawn with dignity and of her own free will from the former Burgundian alliance, she had now been carelessly thrust aside when her army was no longer needed,—as if she were a weakling for stronger powers to play with! Little wonder that the archbishop felt that the hour of his downfall had arrived. Without doubt the Prince would be reinstated in full power, and he must bow his head before—Beaufort,—or Sir John Falstaff?

But the storm that was gathering around him never broke. Even as the King in his triumph turned upon him, recalled to his mind all he had said

and done against Harry Monmouth, and told him plainly that did he hope for further favor he must bow his knee and humbly beg for pardon of the Prince,—even as Scrope, appalled by the sudden failure of his plans, was striving desperately to prepare for this tremendous crisis in events—this unexpected and most public meeting with one whom he had wronged so cruelly,—in the midst of all this amazement and dismay, the door was hurriedly opened and Warwick entered—alone. The King started forward. "My lord, where is my son? He follows close?" Warwick hesitated, and Henry saw the trouble on his brow. Startled, and fearing he knew not what, Henry cried out again, "Where is my son? Where is the Prince of Wales?"

The earl, who understood as did no other man the doubting love and long-repressed desire which had so tortured the royal heart, dared not meet the father's eyes, but answered gravely: "My lord, Prince Harry is not within the city. Upon the day following his arrest he left at daybreak with his entire household, equipped for a lengthy and distant journey. Cold Harbor is deserted; its gates are barred. No man can tell me whither he has gone."

The King in his keen dismay and sorrow held out a trembling hand toward Lord Warwick as if seeking for both physical and mental support. "Gone!" he cried brokenly. "Gone, without one word? Is it the truth that he indeed cares not when I am ill, and troubled, and alone? He knows that my days are

very few, and numbered, and yet he doth leave London secretly. Oh, my son, my son! must I then close mine eyes without a glimpse of thy sweet face which I do love too late? How often have I spurned thee from my side, and now my heart doth call to thee in vain. Oh God, have pity on me! Richard! Neville! Come near me, friends, I prithee, or I fall!"

They caught him in their arms and gently bore him into another chamber. England's King had presided over his last council. The end was drawing near.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Tell me, sweet lord, what is't that takes from thee
Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?
Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth,
And start so often when thou sitt'st alone?
Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks,
And given my treasures, and my rights of thee,
To thick-ey'd musing and curs'd melancholy?"

HENRY IV.

UPON a rocky eminence overlooking the little town of Pontefract, which nestles at its base, and commanding extensive and picturesque views of the beautiful country, was situated one of the most famous castles in all England. In the midst of its surrounding earthworks, the gray walls rose grim, stately and magnificent. A deep fosse encircled the whole, with the barbican and drawbridge at the southwest angle giving entrance to the great keep at the western end, below which lay an extensive bailey. The eight strong, round towers were at equal distances in the curtain-wall of the enclosure, and at the northeast angle was a rich chapel served by five priests. Ilbert de Lacy had done his work full well. Although three hundred years had passed since the Norman built this noble structure, Pontefract Castle still ranked as one of the strongest and grandest fortresses in the land;—its situation upon the towering rock, its extensive fortifications, its

massive walls, in places over ten feet in thickness, making it well-nigh impregnable.

Thither Harry of Monmouth journeyed in those early December days, riding, grave and silent, at the head of his devoted followers. He had left London with but a vague idea of his destination, his one impulse being to leave the capital as far behind him as possible. With this intent he had turned toward the north, and ridden up the great white road of Ermine Street. By the time they reached Braugling, however, and found lodgings for the night, his decision had been made. Expecting an immediate decree of banishment, the Prince desired to be near Scotland; and in his present mood he could ill brook the thought of being the guest unto a nobleman. Therefore, he would go to the royal castle of Pontefract, whose adjacency to York,—that busy, ancient town which always knew the latest London news, would permit of any message reaching him, yet whose gloomy walls would afford him the seclusion that he craved.

Harry was received with joyful welcome at Godmanchester, Ancaster, Lincoln, and other cities through which he passed; but he had little heart for merriment, refused the honors which they sought to give him, and passed on hurriedly to his journey's end.

Great was the excitement in the little Yorkish borough when the Prince arrived in their midst accompanied by an extensive train, and the news

spread that he was to tarry at the castle indefinitely. Not since Archbishop Scrope had been condemned to death within the walls for conspiracy against the King—an event which took place seven years before—had one of the blood royal visited Pontefract; and men, women and children made haste to prepare a royal welcome for their guest. Harry was forced to appear at the great banquet given by the mayor in his honor. For the people's sake he robed himself in choice garments, and tried to forget his dismal thoughts that he might receive their kindness graciously. The humble citizens who entertained him thought that there had never lived so noble a prince before. His handsome face and graceful carriage impressed them; his gentle dignity and charm of manner fascinated them, and ere the feasting ended they would gladly have given their last twopence if he would only have dined with them again.

But the Prince had made his wishes plainly known. "My friends," he said, "I have come into the north, leaving behind me the gay London life, and seeking for rest and peace at Pontefract. It is my pleasure that ye should forget me, for I shall seldom leave the castle walls. I do not travel as the Prince of Wales, nor shall I visit York or other places. Give me leave to dwell in quietness, and grant me your protection from intruders."

Although it was a great disappointment to all that the Prince would not live in royal state, they under-

stood his wishes and jealously guarded him from formal visits of neighboring dignitaries. And if they missed the hunts and splendid banquets, they were exceeding proud that he had graced *their* feast, and that no others might share his blessed presence. From time to time he would appear among them, returning their every greeting graciously, stopping to speak with some merry child, or to bring color to an invalid's cheek by his sunny smile and cheering words.

The people had heard vague tales of his riotous living, and wondered much at his grave and quiet dignity; but his bearing delighted them and ere a week had passed they understood why the Londoners so worshipped him. Their proudest moments were when some York merchants or knights of the shire would approach with their trains, and the mayor himself would frequently appear in person to inform them, with ill-concealed triumph, that "His Grace has come to us for rest and peace; it is not possible that we admit you." The noble visitors were usually most indignant; but argue or threaten as they would, the gates remained closed to them, and they were obliged to ride home again without a glimpse of the famous Harry Monmouth.

The Prince was very grateful for this protection, and the citizens were more than rewarded by his quiet yet sincere, "I thank you." Each day he sent a soldier into York to learn if any message or proclamation had been received from London. He was

acquainted with the failure of the Orleans alliance, and also the rumor that the King was failing rapidly, both of which caused him much anxiety, but no decree of banishment reached him, nor any message from the dying King. Of his father's desire for him he had no idea; for the monarch, cut to the heart by his son's departure, and moved by the archbishop's continued arguments, would not permit Warwick to send for him.—"Nay, since he cares not for me, e'en let him go; I'd rather die remembering his face than with his actual but loveless presence." Arundel, of course, was careful to prevent the knowledge of the King's real feelings from being known—he still hoped that did Bolingbroke die without a reconciliation, Prince Thomas might be crowned.

So Harry Monmouth lingered within the distant castle, spending many weary hours upon the battlements engrossed in gloomy thoughts. If this cruel knowledge of men's harsh opinions had but reached him in a more gentle manner! Were there no friends who could have come to him and gently told him that he was unwise? If only Warwick, Westmoreland, ay, or Gascoigne himself, had visited Cold Harbor and spoken thus:—"Men say evil things about thee. Because thou drinkest with Falstaff, Bardolph, Poins, they claim thou lovest naught but wine and revelry. Because thou dost return the moneys that they seize, there be those that think thou hast had a share in the robberies. Thy efforts to preserve thy friends from harm have

made men say thou wouldst protect all crime." —If some one had only put it thus before him, quietly and without witnesses, he would have seen that he was doing wrong, and stopped in haste; but they had barred him from council and from court, forced him, by insults and by scorn, to seek what pleasure and comfort these friends offered him; denied him all share in government or warfare; held their peace when they saw him doing wrong; then, suddenly, without one word of warning, or even seeking to learn whether rumor spoke the truth, Gascoigne had charged him with living an evil life, breaking the laws of England and protecting criminals—declared all this before his friends and servants, before the throng of curious spectators, and had given him no chance to justify his actions, but straightway committed him to the common jail! It was not wounded pride, however, nor a sense of injury which caused the Prince to dwell upon that public rebuke. True, his disgrace had hurt him keenly and he felt that Gascoigne had been most severe,—ay, even unjust, for was not every man entitled to speak in his own defence?—but it was the opinion which the justice held of him and which others undoubtedly shared, that brought to him such intense grief and shame. Was it possible that they could so easily misjudge him? That actions which were in themselves innocent could be transformed by a word into sin? Then he began to ask himself the question—was he indeed so innocent of wrong?

He had not intended to do evil, but doubtless few sinners so intended. He had spent his hours in drinking with his friends—what if his desperate situation had forced him to it—did that make the fact less real? Never had he taken part in robberies, yet when he used his money to replace the thefts was he not aiding his friends in committing them? And he had, indeed, protected Falstaff and Poins more than once, and sought to release Bardolph from the law's control. True, they were not common robbers, but men of brains and wit and birth, who, overheated by their cups of sack, had gone out into the night to play a jest,—to enjoy the excitement and the contests of skill which lay in attacking passing travellers. They had but done this twice or thrice for sport, and all that they had taken was repaid, yet in the judgment of impartial law they were the equals of any vulgar thief.

Harry would have been the very first to insist upon obedience to the laws—when he shielded his friends it had not occurred to him that he was protecting criminals, but now he saw most clearly what he had done; and with clenched hands and fiercely bitten lips he cursed his own blindness and folly, and prayed that he might have the chance to prove how deeply he repented of his faults. But what if this blessing were denied him? What if he had sinned too deeply for forgiveness? Could he pay the penalty with that high courage which would be the token of his royal blood?

He shuddered and glanced around the gloomy castle. Here rose that grim tower whose walls were ten feet in thickness and whose only entrance was a trap-door in the floor of the turret. Into that black hole his ancestor, Thomas of Lancaster, had been thrown, to lie, bruised and half starved, on the cold floor, and dragged out at last only to be taken to execution. Yet Thomas had met his fate bravely, as became the grandson of a king. Across the courtyard lay the chamber where the poor, weak King Richard had been confined, and where, only twelve years before, he had suffered a mysterious death. Yet Richard, in the hours of his downfall, had borne himself with better spirit than when he sat upon the throne, and many were the tales whispered around Pontefract of his patience and submissive dignity.

Ah, but these princes had lived for many years, had shared in the great events of their times, and their wearied spirits must at last have welcomed death. But he was young, scarce a man in years, longing to work, to fight, to bring glory to his beloved country. To wait in chains and then to die were easy; but such was not his fate,—had it been so he would not have been released from King's Bench Prison. Nay, his future was to be far more wretched. Exile was his bitter punishment. The King, no doubt, believed it merciful—still loving his wayward son, he would not take his life, nor force him to exist within a dungeon, but would banish him from England, granting him liberty to roam at

will in foreign lands. Ay, he would be free—free to wander restlessly from court to court, received at each with careless courtesy, or even with harsh words and scornful looks; free to watch his country from afar, knowing himself an outcast, despised of men or utterly forgotten, forbidden to share in England's government, denied even the right to draw his sword in her defence; or else free to know that his own brothers feared him, that they doubted his submission to the King whom Parliament had decreed should rule; free to be the centre of foreign plots to place him on the throne; free to struggle with temptation and overcome it, and then to have his tempters laugh at him, and, as his uncle Winchester had done, force him to seem a traitor against his will; free to see his countrymen lie dead, slain in the effort to keep him from the throne; free to see England torn by civil strife, his very brothers warring against each other as the Third Henry's sons had fought so long ago; free to stand helpless, buffeted by fate, powerless to prevent this misery and yet proclaimed by all the author of it— O God! was it not his duty to choose eternal death and fall by his own hand rather than live to bring calamity to his beloved people?

In agony of soul the Prince sank upon his knees and raised his eyes to the great vault above, in which not even a star shone to give him comfort. "Help me, merciful Father," he implored, "teach me what is thy will concerning me." And as he prayed, in

the soft twilight he seemed to see a face looking upon him with pity and deep love—a woman's face, vague and undefined, like the faint memory of childhood, but yet so sweet, so beautiful, that he gave a cry of remembrance and joy. "Mother! Hast thou come to soothe thy troubled son?"

Mary de Bohun had died when her eldest son was but six years of age, yet from her he had received the only love his childhood knew, and it seemed entirely natural that she should appear to comfort him in this his darkest hour. Her brown eyes, ever filled with tenderest affection, gleamed out of the darkness, and her faint voice sounded in his ears:—"Courage, my son; go to thy father, for he is dying and longs for thee." "He will not receive me," Harry answered, but the gentle voice repeated,—"Go, go, before it is too late!" The Prince sprang to his feet and stepped quickly forward, but the vision faded from before his eyes. He raised his voice and called "Mother, mother!" Out of the darkness came a soldier's figure, and a deep voice asked, "Did you call, my lord?" Harry shook his head impatiently, but the man continued,—"The mist is heavy and it groweth cold. Your Grace hath been asleep." "Asleep?" he asked, astonished. "Ay, my lord, I passed you an instant since and you were sleeping. Will your Grace go in?"

The Prince entered the round tower which he had chosen for his abiding place, and in much amazement went to his chamber. Was it indeed a dream,

or had she actually appeared before him and given him this command? Had he not seen her eyes and heard her voice, ay, and spoken to her with his own lips? But the soldier declared that he had seen him sleeping. What matter? Dream or vision, he would obey her wish,—he would once more beg to see his father, and if the King still doubted his loyalty, then he would pray to suffer a traitor's death rather than to live and cause him grief and shame.

Early the next morning Harry arose, and summoning his servants together informed them that he would start within the hour for London. "I go to seek an audience of my father, and if I fail I will return with speed. Therefore, abide ye here to wait my pleasure. Only a score of soldiers shall go with me, for I must travel with the utmost speed." The selection of his companions was made with difficulty, since each one begged to be of the number; but presently the little company was prepared. As Harry mounted, he glanced over the great castle and asked abruptly,—"What name belongeth unto the tower wherein I slept?"

One of the officers answered, "My lord, until now that tower alone hath been without a name. We will call it the Tower of the Prince of Wales."

Harry laughed grimly,—"Nay, I would not have it bear a name so empty,—for I am stripped of honors and of power, and soon, methinks, must even give up the title. Call it, rather, by the name of that man because of whom I came here in dis-

grace,—that man before whom I did bow my knee in token of obedience. From henceforth let it be known as 'Gascoigne's Tower.'" And, smiling at the irony of fate, Harry rode forth and turned his face toward London.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"If it were now to die,
It were to be most happy; for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute,
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate."

OTHELLO.

ELTHAM PALACE, situated only nine miles south of London, was associated with many of the King's happiest days. Here he had wedded Joan of Navarre in 1402, and here he had kept the Christmas season three years before with feasting and much merriment. The beautiful old palace, one of the chief royal residences since Henry the Third's time, two centuries before, had witnessed many a festive scene, and many a gallant party of noblemen and ladies had ridden forth from its gray walls to hunt the deer with which its three great parks were filled. The King had come here frequently with his court, and now that he believed his death was fast approaching he had journeyed thither to spend the Yuletide.

He was unable to sit his horse, and had been compelled to make the short journey in his royal carriage, which in former days he had scorned as too luxurious for a warrior. This vehicle was drawn by four handsome horses harnessed in a row, with the postilion mounted on one of them, armed with

a short-handled whip of many thongs. The carriage itself had four wheels, richly carved, and their spokes expanded near the hoops into ribs forming pointed arches; solid beams, painted or gilded elaborately, rested on the axles, and above this framework rose an archway rounded like a tunnel, the sides of which were pierced by square windows shaded by silken curtains. The interior was hung with the richest tapestries, and the seats, on which the King reclined, half sitting and half lying, were furnished with embroidered cushions and soft robes.

Yet, in spite of all this unwonted luxury, the wretched roads, the constant groaning of the axles, the violence with which the carriage advanced and stopped, descended into the hollows and bounded at the ditches, made the short drive a constant martyrdom, and even his Queen's tender ministrations could not bring pleasure into the sick man's face.

Upon his safe arrival at Eltham, however, he made it evident that he would not brook being treated as an invalid. He gave commands that the feasts were to be as elaborate and the entertainments as merry as upon any former year, and he himself was carried to his place upon the dais of the great banqueting hall and presided over the board with his accustomed dignity. There were gathered the greatest nobles in the land; and men in rich doublets, and beautiful women in magnificent gowns, made the court almost equal in brilliancy to that which had assembled here to witness the King's marriage.

The influence of the holy season of Christmas and the consciousness of his near-approaching end, had caused Henry, in spite of the remonstrances of Arundel, Scrope, and his Queen, to send gracious messages to his brother, Bishop Winchester (Thomas Beaufort, already pardoned, was fighting in France), and also to Lord Suffolk and his son, in response to which the noblemen, accompanied by their ladies, had promptly arrived at Eltham, to be welcomed cordially by the monarch, and kindly by those of the court who either did not hate them or had the sense to conceal their feelings. Because of the archbishop's bitterness, his nephew, the Earl of Arundel, was alone refused this general pardon.

"My lords," Henry had said in welcoming these exiles to the court, "this is the season of good will to men, and it behooves us to forgive whatever evil ye intended 'gainst us, and to receive you once again as loyal subjects ready to serve our person. Therefore, we bid ye welcome to our court." Bolingbroke's trust was not disappointed; for one by one they bowed their knee and declared their allegiance to their King and vowed their readiness to die for him. Therefore, in spite of his ill health, the Christmas was one of the happiest Henry had ever spent. One thing alone marred his pleasure;—although John of Lancaster gravely occupied his place, and Humphrey of Gloucester, the youngest of the royal princes, joined with full zest in all the merriment, the King mourned for his elder sons. The Prin-

cess Margaret spoke often of her husband,—"fighting in France, and denied our merry pleasures," but her grief at Thomas's absence did not prevent her from smiling most bewitchingly upon the lords who clustered about her. Once the monarch had said to his Queen,—"I would that Harry were present at this feast;" but Joan had answered angrily,—"Methinks thou hast a-plenty of traitors at thy board without desiring the leader of them all," and Bolingbroke sighed and did not refer to him again.

But this silence did not prevent him from many earnest thoughts. Gloomily, he relived the years once more and wondered if he had fulfilled the duties of a father toward his first-born son. In Harry's childhood they had been separated, Bolingbroke being an exile from the country, while the boy occupied a position of partial confinement at Richard's court. Upon Henry's usurpation of the throne, the Prince had for a time remained in London, maintaining a separate household; but after the battle of Shrewsbury, in which, although only sixteen, he played so gallant a part, receiving there his first severe wound, yet refusing to leave the battle-field until victory was assured, Harry went to Wales and the King saw little of him until his return from the Welsh campaigns and a successful expedition against Scotland, to reside in London. And during the five years that had elapsed since then, what had been the relationship between them? The Prince's immediate and universal popularity had excited the King's jeal-

ousy; his eagerness to take a prominent place in the council, his keen interest in all state affairs, and his amazing knowledge and wisdom, as well as the earnestness with which he performed all his duties, made the monarch fear his active spirit and readily listen to evil tales against him. And now he doubted those tales, even such as seemed to have been proven; he told himself that his jealousy was unfounded, and he remembered bitterly that while many of Harry's enemies had made the court most unpleasant for him, he himself, his father, had repulsed every effort of the Prince for closer friendship; had refused to listen to his protests and explanations, and finally had dismissed him from the court because Lord Scrope had charged him with high treason. And, when it was all too late, and the slanders upon the Prince's name had driven him far from London, the dying father repented of his injustice and longed passionately for his son's presence, forgiveness and tender love. Was it God's purpose to deny him this, in punishment for his many grievous sins?

No, the merciful Father was gentle with him, for upon the first day of January, while the King sat with his courtiers around a blazing fire, in one of the great halls of the palace, there came servants and told him hastily that the Prince of Wales, attended by his guard, stood without and prayed to be admitted. Henry's weary face brightened at the words, the light came to his eyes and a faint color

showed in his cheeks, but ere he could speak the archbishop cried indignantly,—"I had not thought he dared to be so bold. 'Twere well your Grace commanded he be seized and taken to the Tower. He doth presume upon the kindness you have shown him, in granting him his present liberty."

Without a look at the angry and alarmed churchman, the sick man addressed the servants: "Say to the Prince that we will give him audience. Admit him and conduct him to our presence with all the honors worthy of his rank."

"Hold!" Arundel thundered. "Your Highness shall not see him! Think you we will permit a traitor to approach your person?"

The King's eyes flashed. "Sirrahs," he demanded of the hesitating servants, "have ye not heard our bidding? Away with speed and do as we command you." Then, turning toward his nobles,—"Hark ye, my lords. I am resolved upon this matter, and no arguments that ye can use shall change my purpose; but every protest that ye make against my son shall be remembered to your disadvantage."

"Our King is mad," came Baron Scrope's clear voice. "Draw, my lords, and defend him with your lives."

"Put up your weapons," answered the monarch sternly, "and stand behind me. If I am mad, yet I am still your King, and when I do command, ye shall obey! Dost think that one so near to death as I would fear a sword-thrust? I would gladly wel-

come so swift an ending of my misery. Will ye give place, or shall I call my guards?"

Reluctantly and sullenly the noblemen about him parted and drew back, leaving a broad, clear space between him and the entrance. As they did so, the doors were flung wide, and the guardsmen came to a salute and the servants bowed almost to the ground as the Prince entered the hall. Motioning to his attendants to remain upon the threshold, Harry Monmouth advanced across the open space alone. Months had passed since the nobles had last seen his face, and every eye was bent upon him curiously. They noticed first his peculiar costume—a long, dark-blue robe, over which was an academical gown, while around his collar hung many needles with thread, symbolizing the slanders which had attacked him. Then they gazed wonderingly at his face. Those who lead a riotous life show its traces in their countenance—their faces are red and swollen, their eyes heavy and clouded, their manner reckless, lacking all self-control. The Prince was very pale, his eyes were clear but downcast, and if the thought of all the evil they believed against him made his heart burn with shame and sorrow, he yet bore himself with a quiet dignity which astonished them. Never had he looked more princely than when, bowing low before the King, he said humbly, in his clear, sweet voice,—'I thank your Highness for your graciousness in granting me admittance. Will it please you to permit that I speak with you alone?"

A murmur of amazement and protest rose from the noblemen which brought a slight color to Harry's white cheeks; but Bolingbroke commanded silence by a gesture, then said firmly,—"Prince, it shall be as thou desirest. Beauchamp, Neville, lift me up and carry me to yonder closet."

The two noblemen advanced and raised him in their arms; then the Prince following, they bore him slowly down the long hall, past the irresolute courtiers and into the antechamber, where they laid him upon a couch. Henry smiled upon them. "I thank ye, lords. Now pray withdraw and leave us here alone." The earls hesitated and glanced at the Prince. He raised his eyes to theirs, and allowed each in turn to search his very soul; then, silently, and with every token of respect they departed from the chamber and closed the door behind them.

The King raised himself on one elbow, but ere he could speak the Prince came swiftly forward and passionately threw himself upon his knees beside the couch. Drawing the jewelled dagger at his side, he offered it to his father, saying in a low, intense voice which thrilled the single listener: "Sire, I know not what I have done to deserve such deep distrust, but if thou dost believe I am a traitor, I pray thee slay me here with thine own hand and end thy doubts and fears and my keen shame!"

Whatever Henry may have hoped or expected to hear from his son's lips he was utterly unprepared for such an outburst; and in an amazement which

bereft him of all speech he unconsciously accepted the extended dagger, and lay, silent, gazing in bewilderment at the kneeling figure.

But the Prince did not raise his eyes nor see his father's emotion, so when the weapon was taken from his hand he supposed that the King intended to employ it, and promptly laid bare his breast and leaned a little forward to receive the fatal blow. An instant's breathless silence followed, then Harry spoke again, very quietly: "Thou dost not strike, my lord? I have confessed myself and am prepared to die. Better were it a thousand times that thou shouldst end my life than believe that I have one thought toward thee that is not loyal, true and honorable."

The dagger rang upon the floor, and with a cry of "Harry!" the King held out his arms. The Prince raised his head, and in an instant was folded in a close and tender embrace. "My son, my son, thank God thou hast come back to me," said the father brokenly. "Thou canst not know how my heart has hungered for thee these many months. Methought that I must die without thee, Harry, but God has granted me to go in peace, knowing that thou art my true and loyal son."

In response to his father's wish the Prince seated himself upon the edge of the couch. "Sire," he said gently, "I would so gladly have come to thee before, had I not believed thou wouldst refuse me entrance. When thou didst send me in disgrace from court

thou didst forbid that I should try to see thee, and I then sent thee promise of my obedience."

"Ay," answered the King, sighing, "then it did seem wisdom, for men believed that thou wouldst seek to kill me. Why didst thou so desire the crown, my son? Couldst thou not wait the short years of my life? Thou hadst all the powers of royalty,—wert not content I should have the empty honor?"

"My lord, I never sought to take thy crown," replied the Prince simply. "Mine uncle and my friends desired it; I did refuse to listen to their purpose, and they approached thee against my strict command."

The King started and gazed keenly into his son's face. The Prince met his glance openly and freely, and Bolingbroke, wearied and ill, made no attempt to understand, nor reason out Scrope's treachery and the archbishop's hatred, but simply believed and rejoiced in his son's innocence. "I trust thee absolutely, Harry, nor shall I ever doubt thee more," he said; and the Prince's pale face flushed with happiness as he raised his father's hand to his lips. There was a moment's silence, and then Bolingbroke asked: "I understood the reasons for thy absence during the long year, but, Harry, after Gascoigne committed thee to prison, why didst thou not then come to me?"

The young man gazed at him in amazement. "I never dreamed of coming then, my lord. If thou didst punish me when I was innocent, how could I hope for pardon, being guilty? My lord," he con-

tinued, with downcast eyes and reddened cheeks, "never until the justice rated me had I the slightest knowledge of the opinions men held about their Prince. When council, court, and friends were lost to me, I sought forgetfulness in wine and frolic. I now perceive that I have done great wrong, and I acknowledge, sire, that thou wert wise when thou didst warn me against these men whom I have made my friends and intimates. That life is ended, good my lord, forever. I never more shall greet Falstaff or Poins, nor shall I dine or drink in London taverns. Whatever be thy will concerning me, I vow to thee that from henceforth I'll live a life of purity and honor."

The last cloud was lifted from the King's brow by these words and his eyes were filled with happy tears. He understood for the first time the causes that had driven the Prince to such a course; and he realized how great and noble a sacrifice to duty was contained in this quiet abandonment of the gay, free, merry life which was so suited to the Prince's happy nature—a life that he had lived for years, but that only during one brief month had he lived wrongly and turned pleasure into sin; yet now, to guard himself from lying tongues, he would close every door to evil. The bitter thought came to the King that if he had only trusted and loved his son, all this sorrow and misjudgment would have been avoided; yet when he tried falteringly to ask pardon for his jealousy and injustice, the Prince knelt once more

beside him and earnestly replied: "My liege, thou wrongest thyself. Thou hast done naught without weighty cause. Never have I blamed thee, sire, for mine own faults are many, and I have not deserved either thy love or trust. 'Tis I who ask forgiveness of my lord."

"Thou hast it, Harry, from my very heart," the King responded; and then he added wistfully,—"Canst thou love me, Harry?"

A smile so sweet, so tender, came to the Prince's lips, that it needed not his words to fill the dying monarch's cup to overflowing,—"I do love thee, my gracious liege and father."

"Thou wilt not leave me again, Harry," the King pleaded; and his son answered gently,—"Never, my lord, if thou wilt let me stay." And when, a half hour later, Westmoreland entered the chamber, he found the Prince still beside the couch, on which the monarch lay, sleeping like a child and smiling in his sleep.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"To die,—to sleep,
No more; and, by a sleep, to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished."

HAMLET.

"HAST heard the news, my lord chief justice? Thou must hereafter teach thy tongue to speak with graciousness when thou dost mention our most noble Prince." Archbishop Arundel's strong face was drawn into a sneer and his voice gave expression to his scorn.

The King had been brought back to Westminster, and Gascoigne, prevented by ill health from joining in the Christmas festivities, had promptly presented himself at the court upon his arrival in London. Now he stood, calm and dignified, facing the archbishop, and concealing beneath an impassive countenance the anxious thoughts which filled his busy mind.

"So rumor speaketh truth?" he asked carelessly. "I heard a fortnight since that the King had received his son, but methought that it was idle gossip."

"Nay, 'tis too true, and I must warn thee, Gascoigne, that Henry has gone well-nigh daft about him. He will not permit Prince Harry to leave his

side, nor will he listen to a word of protest. Be wise, my lord, and give him gentle words."

Sir William permitted a slight smile to show upon his lips. "How is't with thee, lord bishop?" he asked coolly. "Hast *thou* learned to conceal thy feelings under honeyed phrase?"

Arundel drew himself up somewhat haughtily. "For me, concealment is unnecessary. The King doth know my feelings in the matter, nor has he judged me guilty of injustice. I have opposed Prince Harry's policy, but never have I railed against his person!"

Gascoigne raised his eyebrows, "No, my lord? And dost thou now commend him for his goodness?"

Arundel flushed, then answered with sudden frankness: "To speak the truth, my lord, it is too late. Harry doth know my hatred, and returns it, nor would a few fair words alter my fate. He is all-powerful now, and it doth seem that save by his death alone could we prevent his claiming and obtaining the mighty crown! And when he is the King, then God have mercy upon our England!"

Lord Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, joined the two, asking in surprise,—"My lord chief justice, wherefore art thou here? This is no place for one of thy opinions."

Gascoigne turned toward him quickly. "Will not the King receive me, noble earl?"

Warwick shrugged his shoulders and answered

bitterly,—"Mayhap he will admit thee to his chamber, but thou needest have no hope of speech with him."

"And wherefore not, my lord?" questioned Sir William.

"Because his son doth never leave his side. What canst thou say before Prince Harry's face?"

Gascoigne stared at the earl's flushed cheeks and angry brow in absolute amazement. "My Lord of Warwick," he exclaimed, "methought that thou at least didst love the Prince."

Beauchamp bit his lip. "I love the King," he answered fiercely, "and when his Grace lies dying it were fit that I attended on him. But he doth prefer the presence of his traitorous, unnatural son. God pity us when *he* is crowned our King!"

He strode away, leaving the justice gazing after him in sorrow and bewilderment. "Oh, jealousy, how mighty is thy power!" he murmured, but the archbishop, smiling, answered suavely, "Thou seest Harry Monmouth has few friends. Methinks not one of us will escape his vengeance, but 'tis as well that we should fall together."

Arundel was right,—the Prince had indeed few friends at the court. His enemies had felt confident in their victory—they had driven him from council, blackened his fair name and almost gained the King's consent to have Thomas proclaimed the heir. Could they prevent Harry's reinstatement in the King's favor, upon the monarch's death they could

proclaim the younger prince as King. Victory was almost in their grasp, when, on a sudden, Harry Monmouth had returned, was immediately received and pardoned, and now he alone seemed to possess the confidence of the King. Alarmed and dismayed, his enemies, at the head of whom was the bold and revengeful Queen, sought by every means to drive him from the court. Joan, indeed, did not scruple to charge the Prince before his face with every villainy she could invent, and she even besought the King upon her knees to grant her Harry's death, but her words fell on closed ears. While the Prince stood, fairly quivering with fury, the sick man's glance wandered aimlessly about the chamber, passing her by without a sign, to rest at last in peace upon his son's white face. Then he softly murmured, "Harry," and in an instant the anger died from the young man's eyes, and a deep, tender love took its place as he knelt and answered gently,—"I am here, my liege." And while the baffled Queen, with a glance of undying hatred, hurried from the chamber, the King took his hand within his own, and closed his eyes, content. Many, many times was this scene enacted during those sad weeks, and each encounter left the Prince more pale and his heart filled with grief and sadness.

Few, indeed, dared openly to speak against him, and his constant presence, day and night, beside his father prevented many bitter attacks upon him; but in every face he saw distrust, in every tone heard

scorn. The King was too ill to attempt argument or defence of him, and those who loved him best had no knowledge that he had declared his innocence, far less that he had vowed to abandon his unworthy pastimes and never more to consort with those merry Londoners who had been his misleaders.

It soon became apparent that his constant presence beside his father was exciting jealousy in the hearts of those who should have been his friends. Warwick, Westmoreland, and others who had sought to defend him from injustice, looked now upon him with suspicious eyes, and, being ignorant of his reformation, they could ill brook his constant attendance upon the monarch. Moreover, there were many who thought the Prince took an unjust advantage of the King's illness to regain his rightful place, not realizing that it was the King's request that kept him at his side. Although Henry spent many hours lying apparently oblivious to his surroundings, should the Prince even so much as rise to cross the room, the sick man would turn restlessly and call, "Harry," nor would he be content until his son was once more sitting by his side. Therefore, upon this wintry afternoon, when Gascoigne presented himself at the royal chamber, he found the two together; the King, apparently brighter and stronger than for several days, half-sitting and half-lying among his cushions, while the Prince, dressed in a simple costume of dark velvet, was seated upon a bench beside him, in his hand a poem by the poet Lydgate. Henry was gaz-

ing affectionately upon that face which had grown so dear to him, when he noticed that his son glanced up, started, and changed color. Surprised, the monarch turned his head and beheld the justice advancing toward them. The Prince rose and asked hastily, "Will your Highness grant me leave? I will return erelong." But Henry put out his hand. "Nay, Harry, I prithee leave me not," he answered, and his son could but obey. Gascoigne drew near and bowed low before the invalid. "I am rejoiced that your Highness hath reached London without mishap," he said heartily.

Henry extended his hand. "Thou art truly kind to come to welcome me," he answered cordially. "We missed thee, Sir William, at our Yuletide feast. I trust thy health is in better state?"

"It is, sire," Gascoigne replied, smiling. "I am growing old, my liege, and worn with care, yet death has touched me not. I hope your Highness's strength hath increased since you left us. The air of Eltham giveth life and health."

"Methinks I am more strong," said Henry, while his eyes rested upon the Prince's face with a smile of entire contentment. "This boy beside me doth make me well with joy. Thou seest that I have my son once more."

Gascoigne glanced swiftly at the young man,—they had not met since the scene in the court room. Harry had remained standing near the couch, his eyes fixed on his father, his lips compressed. Now

he raised his head and drew himself up haughtily. He was the Prince,—should he receive no recognition at the hands of this bold man? A slight, half-scornful smile came to the justice's face for a brief instant, then ignoring his future King entirely, he replied, "I rejoice that your Highness improveth day by day."

Harry flushed. Must he still humble himself before this powerful judge? Should not Gascoigne ask for *his* pardon? The King, watching closely, had seen Sir William's smile, and, reading its meaning, exclaimed imperatively,—"My lord, thou hast not greeted the Prince of Wales."

Gascoigne was annoyed, but with entire calmness he promptly turned and bowed, saying, "My lord Prince, I give you greeting."

Harry's eyes fell before the justice's gaze, and too greatly embarrassed to reply, he merely bent his head. But who will blame Gascoigne for saying in his heart, "When my good friend, the King, doth live no more, I am assured *my* life will quickly end. Prince Harry hath no love to waste upon me."

Indeed, such was the belief of various members of the court. Many feared that the Prince would take personal vengeance upon them, while others expected to share in the general dismissal which was prophesied. In the heart of every nobleman there was anxiety,—would not the chief places of the land be bestowed upon Falstaff and his friends? And how could proud England endure the ridicule and

taunts of other nations? Law and order, peace and justice, dignity and power, would end with Bolingbroke's death, and in their place would reign vanity and idleness and foolish mirth. And what escape was possible from this misery? Thomas of Clarence still lingered in France, and many of his strongest adherents were with him. Neither John nor Humphrey would be acceptable to the nation. Unless Thomas returned, there was no choice but to proclaim Harry as King. Urgent messages were sent to the Duke of Clarence, and the physicians used their utmost endeavors to keep the monarch alive until his arrival, and, indeed, Henry seemed to rally and grow stronger; but on the twentieth of March, while praying before the shrine of St. Edward in the abbey, he had a final attack of his disease, and was removed to the Jerusalem Chamber in the abbot's house. There the noblemen gathered, in sorrow and dismay, the physicians came hastily to his side, and the priests approached to give him spiritual succor, but Bolingbroke waved them back. "Nay, trouble me not, I have confessed my sins and am at peace with God and man. And as for you, your medicines are useless. This is the end from which ye cannot save me. Where are my sons, Prince John and Humphrey?"

They came forward, weeping, and Henry feebly placed his hand upon their heads and faintly blessed them. Then his eyes passed from face to face, as if

to bestow upon each mighty lord his farewell greeting. In answer to his gesture of command they all drew back a little space, leaving a single kneeling figure beside the bed. Henry gazed for the last time upon that face which had grown day by day more dear to him, and whispered regretfully: "I would have seen thy brother Thomas once again; give him my blessing, say I longed for him."

"I will, my liege," the Prince promised in a choking voice.

The King smiled faintly and pressed the hand he held. "Harry, thou art very dear to me," he murmured. Then, a brief moment of strength returning, he continued, but in so low a voice that the Prince alone could hear his words: "My son, remember the promise thou hast made to me. Give up all that is evil; clothe thyself about with majesty; make those about thee friends, not enemies, and live and rule as doth become thy blood, with dignity and glory, might and power. Wilt thou do this?"

"I will," answered the Prince firmly.

"Swear it," pleaded the King, searching his son's face.

Harry swept the tears from his eyes and raised them to his father's. With a mighty effort he calmed his trembling lips, and in a quiet, steady voice replied in low tones: "As God lives, I swear that by his help I will so order my life and rule this land that England may be glorious and free, and united in loving and honoring its King. And if I fail to

keep this vow, my liege, I will by mine own hand deliver my country from its unworthy ruler."

Bolingbroke smiled into the earnest eyes and answered: "Now can I die contented, trusting thee, for I do know that thou wilt keep thy vow. God be with thee and bless thee, thou dearest of my sons." He placed his hand upon the bowed head, then let it fall once more by his side. "It is over,—Harry,—farewell," he murmured faintly.

Passionately the Prince kissed again and again the King's thin, wasted hand, his figure quivering with the sobs he sought in vain to repress.

A moment of intense silence, then Bolingbroke cried out in a stifled voice, "Air! Raise me!"

The crowd of courtiers pressed forward, but Harry's voice rang forth sternly, "Give place, my lords! Away!" Tenderly he raised the dying monarch in his arms. For a minute Henry struggled for breath and life, then with a wearied sigh his head fell back upon his son's breast, and the light died out from his clear eyes.

An instant Harry remained motionless; soon he laid the lifeless form among the pillows and gently closed the eyelids. Then as Warwick, the archbishop, and many others crowded around him with exclamations of grief mingled with many tears, he who was now the ruler of them all wrapped his cloak about him, and swiftly passing from among them, went to his own chamber, barred the door, and was alone at last and free to indulge the grief which almost overpowered him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"*Warwick.*—Here come the heavy issue of dead Harry.
O, that the living Harry had the temper
Of him, the worst of these three gentlemen!
How many nobles then should hold their places,
That must strike sail to spirits of vile sort.
"*Chief Justice.*—O God, I fear all will be overturned!"

HENRY IV.

WHEN the first shock of Bolingbroke's death had passed away, the nobles suddenly realized that Harry Monmouth was the King at last, and on the following morning they reluctantly proclaimed him England's monarch. The intense enthusiasm of the common people surprised and puzzled them, and they said to one another with bitter smiles: "These foolish men little dream of the shame which they must suffer presently. They will soon learn to know this man they hail, and they will wish they'd bitten out their tongues ere they had greeted him as England's ruler."

But as the day passed quietly and no message or command came from that distant room, the lords wondered and were filled with strange uncertainty. Where was the Prince? Why came he not forth to claim his exalted place and humble them all before him? But Harry kept his chamber, spending his hours in mourning and prayer, and not until the

funeral obsequies were performed did he appear before them to pay the last honors to his father's memory.

When all was over, the chief noblemen gathered in one of the halls of Westminster to await the first momentous interview with the young monarch. "Didst mark his pallor, and the misery in his face?" questioned Earl Warwick. "Can it be possible he truly loved the King?"

"Not he," answered Archbishop Arundel, with a bitter laugh; "'twas but hypocrisy! Thou shalt find the tears and black soon gone, and he will dye his robes in wine and blood."

"Perchance, my lord," suggested the Bishop of Winchester coldly, "we do not all fear the Prince as thou dost. I do not look for death or quick disgrace."

"Yet thou shalt find it," answered Stanley sharply, "methinks not one of us will escape. Art thou content to bow before John Falstaff?"

Winchester colored, and replied angrily,—"Thou dost misjudge my nephew! Never will he submit our nation to such indignity."

But the chief justice answered with the calmness of despair: "My Lord of Winchester, it hath been long since thou wast of the court, and thy belief in Henry's nobleness hath not been destroyed with ours. Yet I must warn thee, cherish no false hopes. 'Tis not in reason to expect a transformation in a day, nor have I ever heard that power and might

would cause a man to sacrifice his passions and awake in him a nobler spirit. Since as a Prince he led a reckless life, truly he will not govern himself as King."

A murmur of sorrowful agreement ran through the room, then Westmoreland, with a glance of admiration at the quiet, grave face, said,—"Sir William, thou thinkest of the nation, not of thyself. Dost thou not fear what he will do to thee?"

Gascoigne smiled quietly. "Why should I fear, most noble earl? I have but done my duty, and should he decree my death, I would receive it with quiet mind."

"I would that I could offer thee a little comfort," said Richard of Warwick. "In olden days I loved our Prince most dearly; but of late years I have seen little of him, and in the midst of all these bitter charges I dare not even think him innocent. I fear me that unless thou wilt acknowledge the virtues of his companions, there is but little hope for thee."

"And that, my lord, is quite impossible!" answered the justice proudly.

"Impossible, Sir William?" asked a clear voice behind him. The nobles started, and turned in great confusion. The young King had entered the room quietly, acknowledged in silence the deep bows of many of his subjects, and rapidly approached the central group, who, engrossed in conversation, were entirely unaware of his presence. And now he stood before them still clad in his sombre robes, his pale

face speaking eloquently of weary days and sleepless nights, yet with a noble dignity in his manner which made these astonished men suddenly conscious of his new position, and caused them to greet him with every possible mark of reverence. He received their embarrassed salutations with calm graciousness, then looking Gascoigne in the eyes, asked again: "Dost thou mean, lord justice, that thou wilt not at my request commend my friends?"

"Not when they have done wrong, my liege," answered Sir William, respectfully but firmly.

Henry continued very quietly: "And myself, my lord? Wilt thou say no word in praise of thy new King?"

"Gladly will I commend your Highness when you shall prove yourself worthy of my praise," was the bold answer.

A murmur of amazement and alarm rose from the noblemen, but Henry raised his hand for silence.

"Thou hast dealt severely with me, Gascoigne," he said sternly. "Thou didst charge thy Prince, in open court, with offences of which he was entirely innocent. Rumor alone told thee of my evil living, my delight in robbery, my protection of criminals! Thou hadst no knowledge whether these things were true. Because I came asking for the pardon of a friend, was it well to charge me with such falsehoods?"

"Were they falsehoods, my lord?" asked Gascoigne proudly. "Was not this *friend*, whose par-

don you did demand, a self-confessed criminal? Was not your friendship a proof of evil living, and did you not seek to protect him from the law?"

The young King flushed, and cried out sharply—"Gascoigne, I warn thee, remember I am *King*, and hold thy future in the hollow of mine hand! Thou didst charge me with unproven faults, used me with scorn before my friends and servants, and finally committed me to a vile prison. Wilt thou not acknowledge thou didst wrong?"

"My lord," answered the justice simply, "my conscience doth not condemn me, and even if you slay me for the deed, I will not beg for pardon by a lie."

A sudden brilliant smile came to Henry's face, and extending his hand, he answered distinctly: "Since thou art obdurate, Sir William, *I* must yield. At another time I will make more clear to thee wherein the world hath wronged me. To-day it shall suffice that I admit thy action against my person was just and wise. My lord, these men thou dost condemn shall be banished from my presence and my thoughts, and I will curb the freedom of my life, remembering that I am now great England's King. As for thyself, it is our pleasure that thou shalt still bear the sword of justice which thou didst make glorious in our father's reign. And further, be thou near our person at the court, and if thou dost perceive in us such faults as misbecome our state and dignity, be thine the tongue to frame a just rebuke."

As he ceased, a low murmur of amazement and joy rose among them all and increased until it almost became a cheer; but Gascoigne bent his knee, and with eyes blinded by happy tears humbly kissed his youthful monarch's hand. Then, while the nobles stood, amazed and doubting, Henry addressed them with serene dignity. "My lords," he said simply, "ye have greatly feared me, nor can ye readily believe that I will rule as doth become my state. Time must convince you of my sincerity, but what I purpose cannot be performed without your aid and counsel. Uncle of Winchester, wilt thou accept the place in our royal council of lord high chancellor?"

"I will, my liege," answered Henry Beaufort, with a glance of triumph around him.

"I thank thee," answered the King quietly. "We know the worth of thy abilities. Are my Lord of Suffolk and his gallant son in presence?" The two noblemen came forward from another part of the hall. Henry greeted them with a flashing smile and extended his hand, which they kissed respectfully. "Will ye aid us in our government, my lords?" he asked, and they joyfully assented. The King glanced swiftly around him. "Where is my dear Lord Thomas of Arundel?" he cried. Sir Michael again advanced, saying,—"He is without, sire, awaiting your Highness's pleasure." The King waved his hand toward a group of lesser nobles: "Attend him, lords, and escort him to our presence without

delay." Three or four hastened to obey, and the monarch awaited their return in silence. In a moment the young earl was seen advancing, his head held high, his cheeks flushed and his eyes bright with pleasure and excitement. Henry greeted him with the utmost heartiness. "Welcome once more to court, lord earl," he cried, "and may thy future honors repay thee for thy unjust disgrace. I appoint thee mine own successor as Constable of Dover and Warden of the Cinque Ports. Wilt thou also be our royal treasurer, my lord?" Scrope started and paled slightly—what was to be his future? But the happy earl knelt and kissed his monarch's hand as he answered: "Your gracious words, my liege, have blotted from my memory all my past sorrow, and though I am unworthy of these many honors, it is my dearest wish to serve my King."

Henry would not have been human had not a gleam of triumph crossed his face as he glanced first upon the group of his early friends, who stood together, their heads held high, their faces wreathed in smiles, and then allowed his eyes to rest upon those others who had so scorned him in earlier days. Westmoreland and Warwick stood a little apart, doubt, yet hope, written upon their faces, relief that so much had been nobly done, but fear that the young monarch would yet revenge himself upon those whom he doubtless considered his enemies. Archbishop Arundel had turned half away from the royal person, his face was set and his eyes fixed upon

the wall before him. Neither Scrope nor Sir John Stanley dared face his King; but while the latter stood with lowered head and fingers nervously fumbling with his sword, the baron held his head haughtily erect, and with firmly compressed lips and determined eyes awaited his sentence. Without doubt Henry had learned all the truth. What could he hope but his richly merited reward of death?

A moment the King gazed upon the scene before him and thought of all the misery that the doubt and distrust of these men had brought to him; then the petty desire for revenge gave place to the higher vengeance of magnanimity. An instant he turned toward the two earls, smiled upon them, and said briefly, "Cousin Neville and my good Lord Warwick, we know the wisdom our father found in you, nor will our council be complete without your presence. We do desire your assistance in all our government."

"Your Highness shall receive it," they answered heartily; and content, he turned once more and gazed upon those three uneasy men who would not meet his eyes. An intense stillness fell upon the great hall, and every distant nobleman tried to draw nearer, and every ear listened eagerly for Henry's words. He had been generous—most generous, especially toward Gascoigne, who stood near him, watching every act in the little drama with the utmost interest. It was not in reason, thought many of the courtiers, that the King, who had been so

deeply wronged (not by them, thank Heaven!), would forgive *all* his enemies. Evidently the three had no expectation of forgiveness—they certainly deserved their punishment. Hark! the King speaks. Henry's clear voice rang distinctly out through the great crowded hall. "In our haste to welcome and reward those who were our personal friends as Prince, we have for the moment neglected those who have been our father's trusted friends. First of these, in power, and strength, and nobleness, is the Archbishop of Canterbury." Arundel turned and coldly bowed, but did not meet Henry's eyes. The King gazed into his calm face a moment, then took a step toward him. "My lord archbishop," he said quietly, "I cannot offer thee the proud place in council which my father gave thee, yet I trust thou wilt not deny to me the wisdom of thy advice in government."

For the first time in his life the proud churchman started and betrayed his feelings, which were of complete astonishment. "Your Highness means," he stammered, "that you desire me to join your royal council of state?"

Henry bowed. "Ay, that is our request. Thou, who art the highest of our churchmen, didst place our father's crown upon his brow. We trust that thou wilt perform this ceremony for ourself. We desire from henceforth to rule as mightily and ably as any of our ancestors, and thy wisdom will aid us

to this achievement. Canst thou deny this favor to thy King?"

One instant the proud archbishop hesitated, then humbled by the earnest pleading in Henry's eyes, he answered simply: "My liege, in chancel, or in council, in high or low estate, Arundel will gladly serve the King who has this day proved so worthy of his race."

The color flamed into the young man's face, and as he clasped the archbishop's hands in his, the deep brown eyes which had grown so sad of late spoke eloquently of his gratitude. Then he turned appealingly toward his friends, and his relief and joy almost overpowered him as Winchester and his old-time enemy looked into each other's eyes, and for the sake of the young Prince whom they had both despised offered to each other a friendly hand. Then the young Earl of Arundel came forward to greet his uncle, from whom he had been so long estranged, and the happy King turned hurriedly to the last two men. "Sir John Stanley," he said cordially, "for thy good services to our country we will bestow upon thee the Order of the Garter, and do also appoint thee Lord Lieutenant of Ireland for the term of six years, being well assured that thou art fully worthy of these honors." The knight, surprised and overwhelmed, could only kiss Henry's hand, and upon his knees endeavor to stammer out his gratitude; but the King graciously bade him rise,

then very quietly addressed that one man upon whom every eye in the assembly now rested.

"My Lord Baron Scrope, thou hast been a friend both to our father and ourself. For three years thou hast most worthily fulfilled thy duties as royal treasurer. We would have gladly retained thee in that place, and near our person, but circumstances compel us to send thee into France."

"Am I exiled for life?" asked the baron hurriedly, with dry lips.

"Exiled!" exclaimed Henry, "you mistake, my lord—or surely thou wert jesting! We send thee upon a mission of state so delicate and so important, that to thee alone, our dear, beloved friend, dare we trust the execution. Thou shalt learn further of this without delay. Meanwhile, consider what lords thou wilt choose to assist thee, and come to our chamber to-morrow at an early hour."

As Scrope bowed low in assent, he tried to see and read his monarch's face. What did it mean? Was Henry still ignorant of the truth? Ah, how he hated him in his great triumph! If he could only strike a fatal blow before it was too late! And then he started and an evil light came to his eyes—ay, the King was generous, he was forgiving, he was prepared to pardon and to trust all who had been his ancient enemies. Would he not release and pardon one who had been a friend? And even with the thought there fell upon Scrope's ears the voice of Gascoigne asking almost gaily: "Your Highness

hath assured all of the court that you will be their friend. Will you not ask of us in return to receive one single man who is a stranger to us but not to you?"

The King answered gravely: "Ay, Sir William, there is *one* for whom I shall beg a welcome."

"And his name, my liege?" asked the justice quickly.

A sudden silence fell upon all standing near, and the answer was distinctly heard, and produced as great a sensation as any incident of that eventful day. "His name, Sir William," answered Henry calmly, "is Edmund Mortimer, Lord Earl of March."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"The people's prayer—the glad diviner's theme!
The young men's vision, and the old men's dream!"
DRYDEN.

OH, how England rang with the news on that March day! All fear and doubt were banished from the people's hearts. The Prince whom they had loved for so many years, whose brilliant career they had watched so eagerly, whose few faults they had forgiven and forgotten, ever ready to close their eyes to all signs of evil, and to see in the slightest of his acts a token of his nobility of spirit—this Prince whose assumption of the crown they had anxiously awaited, had within the brief hour of his first appearance before the court proved how richly he deserved their trust. Had he not shown the utmost generosity toward those who had sought by every means to ruin his fair name? Had he not exhibited the greatest tenderness toward his dead father? Was it not wonderful that one so young could, at a word, dismiss all those merry friends from his companionship and take upon himself such majesty that all men looked upon him with amazement? And what kindness he had shown toward his old playfellows! They were, indeed, forbidden to come near his presence by ten miles, until such time as their behavior should be worthy of those who would be the friends of England's King, yet in so banishing

them Henry bestowed upon them such rich gifts that they could spend the remainder of their lives in virtuous happiness and comfort. And then came the news that the young King had summoned around him the mightiest nobles of the land; that for each newcomer he had a hearty welcome and a place of honor, and that ere a day had passed he had so wrought upon them that the proudest among them did him reverence, and the bitterest enemies called each other friends, their only rivalry being in their desire to serve their King!

Little wonder, then, that the bells pealed forth, the hill-sides were alight with bonfires, and the sturdy citizens forgot their many cares and gathered upon every street corner and in every tavern to shout and sing in triumph, only pausing long enough between their cheers to drink bumper after bumper to the health of "Harry Monmouth, our King, God bless him!" Never had there been such intense enthusiasm throughout England; London went almost wild with joy. And the most delicious thought of all to that great, supremely happy middle class of English people was the knowledge that they had not doubted nor misjudged their Prince, but had ever defended him from calumny, and that at last they had proved their cause.

And the court? Were the great nobles who had wronged him so cruelly ready to acknowledge that they had utterly misjudged him, and that, except for the one brief month when he had been driven

almost to despair by their harsh treatment of him, and when, with so much evil ready at his hand, he had yet touched so lightly upon sin, and had so nobly paid the bitter penalty—except for that, he had ever been worthy of his name and place? Never! What, admit they had so amazingly misjudged him? That all the evil they had so readily believed was false, that the story of his base conspiracy to seize the throne, his traitorous attempts against his father's life, and the charges against his honesty and purity were merely lies? Incredible! Nay, there was a far simpler explanation. It was preposterous to think that they could be so mistaken, it was impossible to doubt the truth of all those evil rumors! There was too great an array of "proof" against the Prince! No, the truth was that they had indeed been accurate in their judgment of him, but that God, in his goodness, had seen fit to show his mercy to his faithful people, and in the hour of the King's death had so changed the nature of their gracious Prince that he had repented humbly of his past sins, and had put the old evil behind him, appearing before them as pure as though he had passed seven times through the cleansing fire. In the King's grave had been buried the old spirit, and by a miracle he who was in future to rule over them received in its stead a spirit full of such nobility that every man, in grateful wonder, must yield him reverence and serve him with humble love.

Such was the verdict of the court, and for many

centuries history has repeated its decision and stated solemnly that "Henry's youth had been wild and dissolute," but that his nature changed entirely when he became king!

Harry Monmouth, however, knew nothing of his own "sudden regeneration," and so was without the comforting knowledge that those who had once despised him and called him a headstrong boy now gazed upon him with wonder not unmixed with awe, and in their pride and joy and gratitude were prepared to serve him faithfully, with honor and with love,—one must not disobey or distrust a being whose spirit is the gift of God! But Henry, although hoping to win their confidence in time, believed that it would be a long and difficult task; and as he folded his dignity about him as a garment, how desperately he longed for even one hour of freedom and happiness! But he never faltered, he never despaired. The merry past he had put behind him forever, nor did he even allow himself a backward glance. The severe duties of the present filled his mind. It was his task first to heal the personal feuds of the court and win the cordial, loving support of every nobleman; then to unite all his people in the close bond of loyalty to their King; and finally to lead this united nation to such great victories that England should be feared and reverenced in every land.

It was not an easy task for a young man of twenty-five, believing that he was distrusted on

every hand, to set before himself; but the glorious manner in which Harry Monmouth fulfilled it forms one of the brightest pages in history.

* * * * * * *

The Duke of Clarence, hastening home from France in response to the urgent appeals of Archbishop Arundel and his friends, was in a most anxious frame of mind. Messenger after messenger had reached him imploring his instant return.—"The King, thy father, lies at point of death; thy eldest brother is unfit to rule; return, we do beseech thee, ere all is lost! The crown is thine, wilt thou but come for it." Harry unfit? Harry to ruin them if he should rule? The crown to be offered unto *him?* Truly, the English nobles had gone mad! The young duke, who had trusted and loved his brother with all his heart, had been too occupied with battles and diplomacy to lend an ear to gossip. But now, amazed and bewildered, he sought on every side to learn the meaning of this intense anxiety, and there was poured into his ears an array of charges against the Prince which stunned him. Was it possible that his beloved brother had so changed? Doubting and dismayed, he hurriedly set sail and had just landed at Dover, when the final message reached him, telling of the King's sudden death and the reluctant proclamation of Henry as the new ruler. "Thy delay hath been our ruin," wrote Earl Warwick. "Yet, dear my lord, I pray thee, hasten to us. Mayhap thy influence may save us from dis-

grace and banishment. The Prince doth keep his chamber and no man hath seen his face. We tremble when we think upon our future."

A few hours later, Clarence, travelling with the utmost speed, arrived in London. As he rode through the crowded streets he was cheered heartily, but to his amazement it was as the brother of the King! Harry's name was on every lip, and the bursts of applause which greeted every mention of him were well-nigh deafening. "The King's brother—the King's brother," would be the cry; and then, "The King—God bless him!" and the shouts would swell and swell, until it seemed as though every man in England must be present to add his voice to the great chorus of cheers. "So," thought the duke, much puzzled, "Harry is worshipped by such men as these. Would they applaud the downfall of the nobles? Would they accept Falstaff as chancellor?" He rode hurriedly out to Westminster, and sent an officer to inform the King of his arrival, then entering the hall, he glanced around it curiously. It was crowded by noblemen—the highest of the land, and of every party. Winchester and Archbishop Arundel formed the centre of a little circle who were engaged in earnest but quiet conversation. Gascoigne and Lord Suffolk stood beside Chancellor Courtenay, and near them were Earl Arundel and Lord Warwick laughing over a story which Sir John Stanley was in the act of telling them. Clarence fairly gasped. Men who had hated each

other bitterly were standing side by side talking earnestly or gaily, as the case might be. Nobles who had not been at court for years held honorable places among that gay throng—and neither Falstaff, nor Poins nor Bardolph were present! What had come to pass?

The archbishop, suddenly glancing up, saw the young Prince standing, amazed, upon the threshold, and came hastily forward to greet him. "Ah, my lord duke, we are right glad to welcome thee home once more," he exclaimed. Clarence stared at his smiling, confident face in bewilderment. "Art still at court, my lord?" he demanded bluntly, too confused to even return his greeting.

The churchman laughed gaily. "As thou seest, my lord; ay, and at the King's request, I am to be a member of his council. These are joyful days for England, Prince; her King is noblest of all noble men."

"Ye did misjudge him, then!" cried Clarence joyfully; but Arundel shook his head. "Nay, Prince, I fear we scarcely knew his faults, but when thy father died it pleased the Lord to soften Prince Harry's heart. He has repented of his evil deeds, and now doth live a pure and upright life, governing the realm with power and majesty. His present nature is the antithesis of his former self—thou wilt find him wondrous changed, my lord."

He ceased abruptly and drew back with a low bow, leaving the young duke standing alone. A

hush of expectancy had passed over the room and now every face brightened with a spontaneous joy, and every head was bowed as if its highest pleasure lay in that obeisance.

The young King had entered, and as he passed among them Clarence noticed his gentle graciousness. Was he altered? His face was paler than of old, and a certain sadness lingered in his eyes, as if he had suffered during these long months. There was also an air of sovereignty about him which became him well, but the brilliant smile which filled his face with radiance was unchanged, and his voice had never been more sweet and winning than when, with outstretched hands he cried: "Welcome, my brother, thrice welcome to England and to our court!" And at his words there flashed through Clarence's mind the thought of their last meeting, when Henry had been denied admittance to the Council Chamber, and with a sudden realization of all the shame and anguish he had suffered, the young duke gazed into his brother's eyes and answered with a solemn depth of gratitude,—"Thank God that I can greet thee as my King!"

And at that moment came what must have been the young King's greatest triumph, unequalled even by his victories; for while he stood, surrounded by many of his court, and still believing that they distrusted him and wondering if he could win his people's love, there came a messenger from Parliament, the members of which, summoned from the

remote parts of the country, had assembled within the hour. "Great King," he said, "the lords and commons assembled this day in your high court of Parliament, do crave permission of you to send in their allegiance without delay, for they so love and honor you that they would pledge their lives unto the service of your Highness's person before your consecration and coronation make you their sacred King."

An instant's intense silence, while every man slowly realized that never before in the history of their country had such an honor been offered to a monarch, and then the courtiers expressed their joyful congratulations in a ringing cheer. It was some moments before Henry could be heard; and then slowly, in a voice broken by his emotion, he made a response so worthy of his greatness that the world still reads and echoes the applause of his enthusiastic courtiers:

"I thank my lords and commons," he said, "for this evidence of their devotion, and do exhort them in their spheres to use their power for the advancement of the kingdom. The first act of my reign shall be to pardon all who have offended me; and I do so desire my people's felicity, that I will be crowned on no other condition than to use all my powers to secure it. I pray unto God that if he foresees I am like to be any other than a just and good king, he may be pleased to take me from the world rather than seat me on a throne to live a public calamity to my country."

CHAPTER XXX.

"I would be friends with you and have your love."
MERCHANT OF VENICE.

ALONE in his prison chamber, pacing the floor with restless stride, his head bowed and his face troubled, was Edmund Mortimer. Four days had passed since Henry Bolingbroke had closed his eyes in death, and never had the young captive spent days more filled with anxiety. His dear, beloved friend, who had passed so many precious hours in this very chamber, who had promised to use his utmost influence to set the earl free and secure his happiness, was now the King and clothed with might and power,—and still he was a prisoner! What did it mean? Had Henry Fifth banished every friend of Harry Monmouth's? Or was he alone entirely forgotten in the young monarch's triumph? Could it be that the King feared him, or doubted his loyalty, now that the sceptre was in his own hand? Such an explanation seemed impossible, and yet if the Prince had changed so greatly as rumor claimed, perhaps he did expect like change in others!

Gloomily, the earl reviewed the past months. His last meeting with Henry had been in August, when the Prince had tarried for a day at Windsor and had brought him news of the safe arrival of Lady Anne at Exeter. He had noticed then, with much

anxiety, that Henry seemed no longer able to dispel the gloom which was settling upon his spirit; and although Mortimer had made every effort to cheer his guest, it had been of no avail.

A few weeks later the Prince had returned to London, where alarming stories were at once whispered about him, many of which reached the earl through his guards and servants. These suddenly culminated in the tale of Henry's arrest; and then Mortimer could obtain only vague rumors to the effect that the Prince had left the city once more and gone into the north. A month later came his reconciliation with the King, followed by general dismay and apprehension at the court; and now England was hailing the young ruler as one new born to righteousness.

It was a vague, uncertain story at the best, full of apparent contradictions, and the more Lord March endeavored to trace the truth, the more confused and alarmed did he become. He was amazed that Henry had neither journeyed to Windsor nor sent him any message; but until the King's death he had contented himself with the thought that his Prince must be kept away by events beyond his control; now, however, since Henry was all-powerful, this reason could no longer explain his silence, and Mortimer concluded that either he had been entirely forgotten or else that the new King would follow his father's policy and keep him a close prisoner.

The young earl had been so long shut within four

walls that his own narrow life had formed his little world; and he did not realize that the King of England, upon his accession to the throne, had matters of more importance to consider than the freedom of any single man, however noble in blood or dear in friendship. Yet when, later, this knowledge came upon him, it was accompanied by deep wonder and admiration that in the midst of all his manifold and difficult duties, so promptly and thoroughly performed, Henry of Monmouth could yet find thought and leisure to accomplish those little things which make life so happy and beautiful for both high and low.

This revelation was near at hand; for even as Mortimer paced his room with a gloomy and troubled brow, there came a vigorous rap upon his door, and in answer to his summons there entered two gentlemen, richly dressed, at sight of whom the earl sprang quickly forward with a cry of welcome: "My Lord Arundel and Sir Michael de la Pole! Ye are most kind to seek my prison chamber; 'tis rare indeed that I am honored by such noble guests."

"I would that we might claim that exalted designation," said Arundel, laughing, as they clasped hands. "In truth, we are but humble messengers bearing a letter from our gracious King."

He drew forth a packet, of which Mortimer, with flushed cheeks and brilliant eyes, broke the seal. The letter was in Henry's own handwriting, and ran as follows:

"To our dearly beloved friend and kinsman, Lord Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, greeting:

"We send to thee our good friends the Earl of Arundel and the Knight de la Pole, who have received from us full power to give thee thy unrestricted liberty. We have secured from our royal brother the Duke of Clarence a grant of all the lands in his possession which once belonged unto thine honored father. These it is our purpose to bestow upon thee, that thou mayst suitably sustain thy rank.

"We will give thee a hearty welcome at our court, and do desire that thou come hither with thine utmost speed, for it is long since we have seen thy face.

"HENRY R."

As Mortimer raised his eyes from the missive the blush of shame was upon his cheeks. "I have deeply wronged the Prince," he said bravely to the noblemen before him. "We have been so near in friendship that I expected instant freedom; and during these weary days my heart misgave me, and my thoughts were both disloyal and unjust. Oh, how could I have doubted his graciousness!"

"My lord," Sir Michael answered, "methinks thou dost not understand the thing that he has done. The country is amazed that he will free thee, and his advisers counselled him against it. Dost thou forget that thou wert Richard's heir?"

"Prince Harry hath no cause to doubt my loyalty," cried Mortimer angrily.

"Nay, my lord," said Arundel quickly, "'tis not a

question of *thy* loyalty, but some do fear that discontented men will seize upon thy freedom as a pretext to rebel against the House of Lancaster."

"Dost think I would consent to such villainy?" the earl exclaimed impatiently.

De la Pole smiled. "They would not ask for thy consent, my lord. Nay, my Lord Mortimer, do not think we doubt thee, 'twas but my purpose to make clear to thee how others do regard the young King's action. Upon the first day that he appeared before us, even in the midst of his appointments to his council, he spoke of thee and said that he would set thee at liberty. The court was astonished at the news, yet he would not listen to a single protest."

The earl flushed with gratified pride that he had been remembered at such a time, yet he asked hesitatingly: "Why, then, has he delayed my freedom for so long?"

"By Heaven," cried Arundel hotly, "dost think the King hath no measures of more importance to consider than the freeing a single man?"

"Nay, Arundel, bethink thee what thou sayest," cautioned the knight, for Lord March had straightened himself in offended dignity.

"I crave thy pardon for my hasty words," said the soldier quickly; "King Henry doth so labor, day and night, to advance the welfare of his kingdom, that we, his friends, regard his white cheeks and sleep-laden eyes with deep anxiety. 'Twas that which roused mine anger, not thy words."

Mortimer extended his hand, and answered frankly: "I was at fault, my lord. 'Tis difficult for a man so much alone as I not to believe that he is all-important in the world. I did forget that kings have other matters to think upon besides the welfare even of their friends."

"And yet, my lord," said Michael, "this was not the reason for his delay. Scarce a day passed but he would speak of thee, and say to those of us who knew thee slightly, 'I would that Edmund were at Westminster;' but he would add, 'I shall not send for him until my brother Thomas doth return and give to me his lands. When Edmund doth appear before the court, it must be as the wealthy Earl of March, not as a poor, untitled prisoner.' It was but yestereven the duke arrived, and ere he had been present a short hour the King took him aside, and they stood long alone. Then Henry sent for us and bade us ride to Windsor in the early morning and bring thee back with speed. He was smiling happily as if that which he had long desired were accomplished. Prince Thomas looked both puzzled and dismayed, as though he scarce knew what had happened to him, and so I guessed that he had given up the lands."

Mortimer opened his letter once more. "Ay, Sir Michael, Henry doth speak of it herein. Oh, how unworthy am I of his goodness! My lords," continued the earl, turning appealingly toward both noblemen, "ye two who are the King's friends, can

ye forgive me my ungrateful thoughts, and let me share the love that he doth give you? I do desire greatly the friendship of you both—when I shall have proved myself deserving, will ye grant this boon?"

"'Tis we who should sue for thy friendship," cried Arundel impulsively. "When my Lord of March, the cousin and favorite of the King, appears at court, he will have a score of noblemen seeking to do him pleasure. And shall Arundel and the Knight de la Pole be then considered worthy of a word?"

"My lord," answered Mortimer simply, "my love will not be freely given to any one who asks it. My King doth hold the chief share of my heart,—when I have divided the remainder between his two dearest friends there shall none be left."

Arundel looked slightly puzzled by this speech, but Michael understood the feeling of dread which this young prisoner must feel at going out into the great world, and also the longing in his heart for friends who would be sincere; so, with a quiet earnestness of manner the knight looked into Mortimer's eyes, saying, "Lord Edmund, we are friends from this day."

The young earl seized his hand, and when Arundel cried, "I, too, my lord, will truly be thy friend," his cup of happiness was full to overflowing.

An hour later the three young men, attended by an extensive retinue, were on their way to London; and in spite of the wretched roads the sun had scarce

begun to descend from its highest place in the heavens ere the palace came in view. On their arrival Arundel took Lord March to his own chamber, where the latter donned a gorgeous costume of white satin, wearing a black band upon his arm as a token of respect for the late King.

Henry had been informed of their arrival, and so had descended to the dining hall to welcome them. It was a wonderful scene which met the young earl's gaze. Accustomed from childhood to the four walls of his prison room, this lofty and extensive chamber seemed almost awe-inspiring. To his eyes, the hall was crowded, and the gay court costumes of both men and women formed a dazzling mass of color, while the low hum of voices, broken here and there by a silvery laugh, produced the effect upon him of loud and discordant sound. Had he been of plebeian birth, Mortimer would have been confused and embarrassed in his unaccustomed situation; but the blood of princes was throbbing in his veins, and he moved forward between his gallant friends with calm face and unhesitating step.

The gay throng separated and drew back, leaving an open space between the advancing trio and that slender, upright figure, whose black robe made the only blot upon the brilliant scene. And suddenly the meaning of it all became clear to the young earl, and his hand trembled and his cheek grew white with excitement. Until that moment he had expected to greet Harry Monmouth, his dear-beloved

friend. Even the letter had failed to reveal the truth to him, but now, as in a flash, he realized that he was to appear before his mighty King. No fond embrace, no tender, loving word—those days were over and the time had come for humbly bended knee and deep respect in tone and manner. Ay, the gracious, loving Prince had changed as if by magic into a being great and noble, far above his subjects, —a god among men.

They were nearer now, and Mortimer raised his eyes and gave one glance into the face before him. Upon that calm white brow sat majesty enthroned; regal dignity was in the poise of the uncrowned head, and the eyes had lost their troubled look and at last were serene and confident. But as the earl sank upon his knees a change came to the face, a loving look flashed into the brown eyes, and the lips curved in the enchanting, joyous smile which had been the Prince's chief charm; and Mortimer, kissing the hand held out to him, felt vaguely that there was something wonderful in those opposing qualities, but could not realize that Henry of Monmouth, almost alone among the kings of history, had united and blended in perfect unison the calm majesty of a great monarch with the sweet graciousness of a loving man.

As Henry's voice sounded in his ears, bidding him welcome to the court, the Earl of March looked into the eyes he loved so well, and in a clear voice answered fervently: "Sire, I thank you with all my

heart for this gracious welcome; and here, before the members of your court, I beg to offer your Highness my allegiance; and I swear that while I live I will acknowledge you as my true and lawful King, and that my sword and life shall be ever at the service of my sovereign."

"I thank you, Earl of March," answered the King, and then, while the hall rang with cheers, he raised the kneeling earl to his feet, and added softly: "God bless thee, Edmund, mine eyes have hungered for thee, and it doth make me happy to see thee at last in thy rightful place."

An hour later, when Henry sat down to dine, the Earl of March was placed at his right hand; but so attractive was Mortimer's fair young face, and so touching his evident devotion to the King, that not one of the great nobles begrudged him his exalted seat.

CHAPTER XXXI.

'Soft is the breath of a maiden's yes;
Not the light gossamer stirs with less;
But never a cable that holds so fast
Through all the battles of wave and blast."

HOLMES.

"METHINKS the hour is nigh when we must part." The Lady of Devon pulled the threads in and out of the piece of tapestry she was weaving, and glanced swiftly at the maiden by her side, who was busily engaged in sewing upon a long silken veil which she hoped one day to wear over her head during a certain very sacred ceremony. She blushed now and kept her eyes fixed demurely upon her work. "'Tis fortunate," continued Lady Eleanor in a musing tone, "that thy wardrobe is at last complete, and thou canst finish yonder veil in a few hours. Thou wilt be arrayed as charmingly as any lady of the court. I shall miss thee, Anne, when thou hast gone to thy lover—old Rougemont will be gloomy indeed without thy sweet, merry presence."

The Lady Anne Stafford reached out and seized one of the countess's hands, pressing upon it a fervent little kiss. "How kind thou hast been to me," she murmured. "Thou hast labored for me throughout these long months, and thou hast thyself supplied

those fine linens and velvets and exquisite silks—in truth, I am provided like a queen; and all has been thy gift, yet a year since thou didst not know my name. Oh, was there ever goodness like to this?"

Eleanor laughed softly, and leaning forward kissed Anne's pink cheek. "Dear, wilt thou not wed my brother?" she asked gaily. "Could I permit his bride to appear in unworthy raiment?"

"Nay, but my mother would have provided me when she did learn the truth."

"Ay, doubtless," answered the countess, "but wouldst thou have been content to wait another year before thy marriage? Nay, my sweet sister that is to be, this hath been a happy winter in my quiet life. I have stitched many joyful thoughts and prayers into thy wedding garments. Anne, when the Prince warned me thou wert approaching, my heart was filled with anxious fears; but thy presence here hath been a constant joy to me. Ay, and my Lord Edward also hath been comforted in his affliction by thy sweet voice and ready sympathy."

Anne smiled brightly in answer to these words. It had indeed been a happy, busy winter for all the inhabitants of Rougemont. The blind earl and his devoted countess had taken the young maiden into their warm hearts, while she had repaid their great kindness by such a sunny spirit of contentment that no one could be gloomy or dissatisfied in her presence, but all were fain to share her joyousness. The extensive preparations for her marriage had kept

not only Eleanor and Anne herself constantly employed, but every woman servant within the castle had shared in the pleasant labor.

The countess had, from the first, perceived that since the Lady Stafford must remain in hiding until Mortimer was enabled to marry her, she would be obliged to choose between the alternatives of waiting for long months afterward, while her mother provided proper garments for her, or of marrying without delay and appearing unworthily gowned for her position. Therefore, Eleanor, whose few years of married life had not destroyed the memories of those sweet days when she was herself a bride, at once determined that this high-born maiden should be suitably prepared for the great event of her life. The earl's consent was easily obtained—his only living child, a son by his first wife, had already married—and the young countess labored with as much love and pleasure as if she had been making ready her own daughter.

And now, at last, all was completed. The rich materials had been converted into exquisite garments, and the fair young bride spent many happy hours in gazing delightedly upon that goodly array —what true woman does not enjoy the possession of beautiful apparel?

Yet now that the long-expected day was fast approaching, the future seemed a vague, uncertain dream to Lady Anne. Would her lover be set at freedom? And would he still desire the maiden

whose heart he held? "Will he not marry me at some wayside chapel and take me secretly to Scotland with him?" she asked fearfully.

The countess's voice rang out in a peal of merry laughter. "What, hast thou lost thy courage, Mistress Anne? Hast thou not said a score of times to me that thou wouldst gladly wed him in his prison? And dost thou hesitate to live with him in exile?"

"No, no!" she cried eagerly; "I would follow him unto the ends of the earth; but, dearest madam," she continued, half laughing, half ashamed of her desire, "I would that I might wear my pretty gowns at court."

"And so thou shalt," cried Eleanor, embracing her. "Fear not, my sweet, the Prince will give thee every happiness."

"How greatly thou dost trust him," murmured Anne.

Eleanor flushed as the memory came to her of that happy night when he had sung that passionate ode to love,—the tender voice still rang in her willing ears, but she answered very gravely,—"He is my prince—my king. Whate'er is best, that he will surely do."

"When did the messenger say the late King died?" asked my Lady Stafford musingly.

"Upon the twentieth;—'tis twelve days agone."

"And upon what day will the Prince be crowned?"

"Nay, thou canst not hope to witness that great

ceremony," answered the countess. "'Twill be in eight days more—upon the 9th of April."

"Dost thou not think thy brother will be freed before that day?" asked Anne wistfully.

"'Tis possible, yet he will not leave London until that event be accomplished."

"Dost thou expect that he will come for me himself?" cried the maiden, her cheeks aflame.

Lady Devon laughed mischievously. "We shall soon learn," she answered; "in a fortnight more methinks thy doubts shall end most happily."

"Will it be so long?" and Anne sighed so gloomily that the countess sprang up and gave her a playful little shake, mingled with many kisses. "Thou impatient child!" she exclaimed. "Throughout the long winter thou hast been contented, yet now thou wilt not wait in peace for a few days."

Anne joined in her laughter, and was about to give a merry answer when the sound of a horn made both ladies start and listen intently. The sweet, merry notes rang out again, and a great commotion followed in the courtyard below. The countess sprang upon a bench, and peered through a high window. "Oh," she exclaimed, "a great body of horse, and the men in fine array. I' faith, I do believe they are of the King's guard. Run, maiden," she cried to Anne, who stood below, fairly trembling with excitement, "run and don thy choicest garments, then come to the great hall. Away—make haste!"

Lady Stafford darted from the room as if her feet were wings, and Eleanor, after one more peep from the window, dismounted from her perch and hurried to her own chamber.

In a surprisingly short space of time the earl and his wife, richly arrayed, and surrounded by their ladies and esquires, had taken their places upon the dais of the great dining hall. To the countess's intense anxiety Anne had not appeared, and she was about to send a messenger to summon her, when the doors were thrown wide and the steward announced: "The Lord Earl of March!"

Eleanor started and caught her breath. The hour so long awaited was already here. Her brother! The lover of Lady Anne! She gazed at him with intense eagerness. He was dressed as richly as a prince, in royal purple velvet, trimmed with ermine, the white satin lining of his cloak making a striking background for his handsome figure. He came forward proudly, his head held high, his manner full of dignity. Behind him stood half a score of officers, among them Captain Derrbury, who attended him as his esquires. "Thou must be furnished royally," the King had told him when he protested against the generous arrangements of his sovereign. "When thou canst, thou shalt have thine own livery and servants. Meanwhile, thou shalt use mine. Shall I send thee with a few mean followers to escort thy bride?"

Every eye was fixed upon the gallant earl, and

many a woman's heart beat faster as he came forward. Mortimer looked neither to the right nor to the left, but straight before him. The Earl of Devon, feeling although not seeing his near approach, extended his hand. "Lord March, I bid thee welcome to Rougemont," he said graciously.

"I thank your lordship," answered Edmund distinctly. "I have come, my lord, at the command of our gracious King to summon thee and thy countess to his coronation. 'Tis his desire that the highest of the land shall be his guests, and he is most urgent that ye shall not say him nay."

"Ah!" quoth my Lord Courtenay, well pleased, "we thank his Highness, and shall be glad to conform to his request. Dost thou hear, madam? Thou shalt accompany me."

For once, the Lady Eleanor did not protest. "I am content, my lord," she answered happily. Mortimer turned and gave her a searching glance. She was not beautiful, as he had hoped. Indeed, for an instant he was greatly disappointed; but now, as she raised her eyes, and shyly, yet with heartfelt earnestness, said softly: "Brother, it doth rejoice my heart to welcome thee," he quite forgot her plainness and remembered only that she was his sister; and bending, pressed a fervent kiss upon her hand as he answered,—"Madam, I have much for which to thank thee, and words cannot convey my gratitude. Prithee, how doth the Lady Anne of Stafford?"

Eleanor's face was brightened by so brilliant a

smile that Edmund's heart went out to her in that moment. She was silent for an instant, gazing into his eager eyes, then she answered with a rippling laugh, "Thine eyes can answer thee more fully than my lips. Turn, brother, and behold."

The earl whirled around and stood transfixed. The Lady Anne had entered the great hall and was moving calmly forward, accompanied by six ladies-of-honor. Dressed in pale yellow satin, her long train edged with rich fur, her sleeves falling to the ground, her waist, embroidered with jewels, cut square to show the white neck, and her fair hair half hidden by the veil which fell in graceful folds from her headdress,—she was the picture of a haughty court beauty, moving with head erect and stately step. But suddenly she saw Lord Mortimer, and glad recognition flashed in her eyes; color flamed to her cheeks, her proud head was lowered, her feet faltered, and she stood still, amazed, confused, and trembling.

One instant's hesitation, then with eager footsteps and blazing eyes, which betrayed his story to every person present, the Earl of March swiftly crossed the hall and sank upon one knee before the lady. "Sweetheart," he whispered, "hast thou no welcome for me?" Her eyes met his timidly, then bravely. Passionately he kissed her fair white hand. "Rise, my lord," she murmured.

"My ring is still upon thy hand," he said; "I have

come to claim thee as my bride. Wilt thou go with me, Anne Stafford?"

"Ay, my lord, with all my heart am I content to go," she answered him, and the look in her eyes was sweeter than her words.

He rose and took her by the hand and led her to where the countess stood watching them with tear-dimmed eyes. "Fair sister," said the earl, "thou hast kept this maiden for me throughout these many months. I thank thee for the kindness thou hast shown her, and now I ask that thou wilt give her unto me."

The Lady Devon took Anne in her arms and kissed her tenderly. Then she placed her hand in Mortimer's, saying, "Take her, my brother, and see that thou prove thyself worthy of so precious a possession."

Several hours later the lovers were alone together. The lady was sitting upon a marble bench, while Mortimer reclined upon some cushions at her feet. They had been silent for a space, their thoughts meeting in sweet sympathy, then the earl said,—"Thou hast asked me many questions of my past, but nothing of our future. Dost thou not fear to wed a penniless, untitled man?"

"Art thou indeed penniless?" she asked him gravely; then touching his cloak, she added with a shy laugh, "Thou art not arrayed like a destitute man, my lord, and thy gallant esquires and hosts of

servants—do they accompany one without wealth or rank?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "To-day I am the King's messenger sent to summon the Lord of Devon unto the coronation feast. It was necessary that I should appear worthy of my mission. But to-morrow,—" he gazed into her eyes longingly. "My sweet," he said, "in thy shining garments thou shouldst occupy the honored place at the King's table, and can I dare to dream that for my sake thou wouldst give up the gay life at the court to follow so unworthy a man as I?"

"Thou meanest that thou wilt be exiled?" she asked anxiously.

He seized her hand passionately. "Wouldst thou go with me, lady?"

Her eyes fell, and her lips trembled a little. "I like not the thought of exile," she answered sadly. He released her hand.

"My wife must follow me," he answered gravely. "She must share my sorrows and comfort my distress. If I am doomed to be a banished man, her happiness should consist in being with me."

He had turned his face away, but now an eager hand was laid upon his shoulder and a sweet voice said hurriedly: "My lord, dost thou doubt my love? In truth, I do not desire exile, but could I be happy in the highest place unless thou wert by my side? Ah, my dear lord, I am ready to go anywhere,

even into the great unknown realm of death, so thou wilt but be with me."

He looked at her,—her eyes were full of wistful tears, but such a love shone forth that suddenly he seized her in his arms and rapturously kissed her lips. "My bride!" he murmured, as she, blushing and quivering like a frightened bird, yet clung to him as if content at last.

"Sweetheart," he said gravely, looking into her eyes, "I sought but to know the full depth of thy love. Dost thou believe that I would ask thee to share so wretched an existence? Nay, I am far too unworthy of thee, even were I a prince; and yet I cannot give thee up," he cried passionately.

"Indeed thou canst not," she answered with a joyful laugh, "however much thou mightest desire it, thy only choice is now to marry me."

What he answered only she could hear, but the blushes chased each other over her cheeks and neck, and her eyes sparkled with tender joy.

"Nay, lady," he said presently, "when thou weddest me, thou dost wed the Earl of March. The King received me as his honored friend; placed me at his right hand at meat, and did show such kindness to me that the greatest nobles of the court did welcome me with graciousness. My title and my lands are all restored, and Lady March shall never lack for honor. Wilt thou be happy, dearest?"

"I' faith, my lord, methinks my cup is full to overflowing. Will there be no blot upon my joy?"

"None except myself," he answered humbly. But she put her pure white arms about his neck, and looking into his deep eyes, whispered softly: "Edmund, my husband, without thee my life were dark and cheerless. Thou alone dost make it into Heaven."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"The road shall blossom, the road shall bloom,
So fair a bride shall leave her home;
Shall blossom and bloom with garlands gay,
So fair a bride shall pass by to-day."

THE day before the coronation had at last arrived, and never had the English court presented a more brilliant assemblage of lords and ladies. From the four corners of the kingdom the nobility had gathered to witness the impressive ceremonies and partake of the sumptuous feasts.

Among others whose presence Henry had particularly requested was Madam Bourchier, who still retained her former title of Countess of Stafford, and she was accompanied not only by her son Humphrey, the earl, a handsome boy, who, in later years, was to become the first Duke of Buckingham, but also by her husband, William Bourchier, a man of gentle and submissive demeanor, but who was to prove his bravery in the French wars and win there the proud title of the Earl of Ewe. The King had been informed that certain persons whose arrival he had been anxiously expecting were already within the palace, so when the three were presented he greeted them most graciously, and instead of permitting them to mingle with the gay throng detained them in earnest conversation.

"Is this thy son's first appearance at court?" he asked the mother, gazing kindly into the lad's big eyes.

"Ay, my liege," she answered, "during the long winter he has been my chief comfort and companion since my daughter so cruelly deserted me."

"Call her not cruel, madam," Henry exclaimed hastily, "didst thou not separate her from thee by placing her in the Minories?"

"True, my liege, but to keep me in this wretched ignorance of her welfare was most unfilial. My heart has been heavy with doubts and fears these many months."

"Thy anxiety was natural and most commendable, madam, yet thou hadst the assurance of Michael de la Pole for her safety."

The lady started. "How knowest thou this, my liege?"

"I saw the letter writ," answered Henry calmly.

The countess trembled with excitement and dismay as the memory of the Queen's charges surged through her brain. "How now, sire!" she demanded almost fiercely, "what shall I think of this? Dost *thou* know where my daughter Anne is hid?"

Henry gave a swift glance around the hall, then lowering his voice, answered rapidly,—"Madam, I must pray thy forgiveness, for 'twas I who took her from the convent. She was beloved by a noble lord and I was not content that she should become a nun. I implore thee, by thine own wedded happiness, do

not refuse to grant the boon that my friend will ask of thee;—" and before the bewildered lady could grasp the meaning of these hurried words the King had stepped forward to welcome his latest guests, and Humphrey, with a startled cry of "Sister Anne!" had rushed past him and literally thrown himself into the blushing maiden's arms.

If certain members of the astonished court looked deeply shocked at so grave a breach of etiquette, Henry himself appeared to greatly enjoy the confused scene. He greeted the Earl and Countess of Devon most cordially, and the look of gratitude which he bestowed upon the latter repaid her richly for all that she had done. Then as Lady Anne advanced, her brother still clinging to her rapturously, the King bent low over her hand and exclaimed gallantly,—"Ah, fairest lady, there be many here who envy thy happy brother, and wish that they might follow his example." Turning to the Countess of Stafford, who had stood speechless and astounded during these rapid events, Henry led Anne forward, saying gently,—"Madam, I took thy daughter from thee; I now restore her unharmed to thy care." An instant the two women gazed into each other's eyes; then with a little cry the countess held out her arms and Anne buried her face upon her mother's breast.

The young monarch turned quickly away and flashed at Mortimer a brilliant smile of welcome and congratulation, at the same time addressing my

Lord Devon most graciously. He conversed with the earl and Lady Eleanor for a few moments, then once more approached the Lady Stafford and presented to her and to her husband Lord Courtenay and his wife. While she was expressing to them her gratitude in fervent language—for Anne had hurriedly told her of their great kindness—Henry called Mortimer to his side. "I do not need to ask thee, Edmund, if all is well with thee," he said, "thine eyes betray thy happiness."

"Oh, my lord, never was man happier," answered the earl, every tone of his voice trembling with joy, and his eager glance constantly wandering to where his loved one stood, "she welcomed me with such sweet graciousness that methought my cup of happiness did overflow. My liege," he added hurriedly, with an anxious look, "dost thou think her mother will consent?"

Henry smiled reassuringly. "Do not let thy courage fail thee," he answered, then taking Mortimer by the hand, he brought him to Lady Stafford. When she saw the two young men standing before her, the one in his sombre robes and his royal air of dignity,—the other, far more richly dressed, his fair, youthful face full of eagerness, his eyes imploring her to be kind, a sudden comprehension of the King's words flashed to her mind and she shot a swift glance at her daughter, who, with crimson cheeks and downcast eyes, stood by her side.

"Madam," said the King, "this is my cousin and

dear friend, the Earl of March." She raised her eyes and gave him a searching glance as she uttered a few words of greeting.

The earl met her gaze fairly and frankly. "Madam," he said, marvelling in his own mind that his voice was so clear and steady, "I have loved thy daughter for two long years. My gracious lord and sovereign, knowing my heart, wooed her for me while I was yet a prisoner, and for my sake did take her from the convent. And now that, by his goodness, I am free and restored to my title and fair estates, I pray thee, give me Lady Anne to be my wife."

The countess looked from his handsome, eager face to her blushing daughter. Anne raised her eyes and gave her mother one swift, appealing glance, then turned with a rare smile to her lover. The countess saw that smile, and the knowledge of her own happiness brought a mist to her eyes. She glanced questioningly toward Bourchier, and when that gentleman, amused yet gratified by her unusual appeal for his opinion, said quickly, "Prithee grant them their desire," she hesitated no longer, but taking Anne's right hand placed it in the earl's, saying brokenly, "Take her, my lord, and may God bless you both." And when the earl tried, in his great happiness, to thank her for this priceless gift, and Anne seized her hand and pressed it fervently, King Henry quietly moved away and, mingling with his courtiers, smilingly said, "Ye must congratulate the

Earl of March, my lords; he hath won the Lady Anne of Stafford for his bride."

* * * * * * *

That night the impressive ceremony of conferring the order of knighthood took place in the great hall of Westminster. The candidates, after having performed the required ablutions, were robed in long green coats lined with miniver, and having upon their left shoulders a double cord of white silk with pendent tufts. Among them, to his great delight, was Mortimer; and when he found himself actually being created Knight of the Bath, he felt that Henry's kindness was indeed without limit. The usual feast followed the ceremonies, but the King did not partake of it. Indeed, the young monarch, greatly to the surprise of many of his court, was determined that every ceremony should be marked by great simplicity. His father had conferred the order of knighthood in the Tower, his ride to London and back being a grand and triumphal procession; but Henry the Fifth would have none of such display. "My father is scarce cold within his grave," he said to certain of the nobility who remonstrated with him. "Shall I deck myself with brilliant colors and rejoice that I am to be the King?" And Henry's wish prevailed, even on the day of coronation.

Passion Sunday, the 9th of April, 1413, dawned dark and threatening, and as the morning advanced the storm and wind increased. Many were the prophecies occasioned by this gloomy weather, but

Henry was undaunted by the elements. He arose early and confessed himself, then proceeded to the chapel, where three masses were celebrated. Meanwhile the Abbey had been crowded by nobles and their ladies, and there were also present certain of the most important gentry. Presently the great procession entered the sacred building, the bishops and priests leading, followed by the King, whose sombre garments were in striking contrast to the scarlet robes, mantles and hoods of ermine, and golden coronets worn by the great nobles in his train.

The solemn rite of consecration was administered by Archbishop Arundel, and then Henry, as head of the English Church, was vested in a bishop's robes, and finally the crown of St. Edward the Confessor was placed upon his head. These ceremonies being concluded, the young King addressed those who were gathered to witness his coronation in a speech so dignified and noble in purpose, that all who listened were filled with wonder and delight. Those principles which had so amazed and rejoiced his courtiers he now declared to the world, and the promises which he there made to his people were faithfully fulfilled.

The great nobles left the Abbey, and went to the dining-hall of the palace—where a most elaborate banquet was spread—discussing with earnestness and enthusiasm the appearance and speech of the young King; and never was a monarch's health

drunk with greater joy. But Henry himself went quietly to his own chamber; and, refusing to take any part in the rejoicing, he spent the remainder of that memorable day in solitude and prayer.

Three weeks later, however, occurred an event in which the King took a most prominent part, for the first time appearing in royal raiment and allowing himself to enter thoroughly into the pleasures of the occasion.

Mortimer, impatient for the consummation of his happiness, had used every argument to hasten his wedding. The countess finding, to her amazement, that all preparations had been made for her daughter's marriage, could offer no opposition, and so the day was speedily determined upon.

The Bishop of Winchester, seeing how sincere a friendship existed between the young earl and the King, and being anxious to please his royal nephew, proposed to give the marriage banquet at his palace. His offer was gratefully accepted, and upon a beautiful day in early May, when Nature had donned her choicest garments, a brilliant company assembled in St. Saviour's Church.

The noble birth and modest bearing of the young earl, and the beauty and wealth of the fair lady, had caused the young couple to be regarded with a very general interest, which was intensified by the knowledge of their romantic story. Any doubts which might have still existed as to the lady's feelings for the King were entirely dispelled by her very appar-

ent love for Lord March. The account of the Prince's wooing fully explained what had once looked so strange, and not only was Lady Anne completely vindicated, but all the members of the court, including the widowed Queen herself, felt impelled to show their sorrow for their past injustice by bestowing upon the fair young bride every possible honor and attention. Therefore, the famous church was crowded with the noblest of the land, one and all arrayed in their richest and most splendid raiment.

Never had the Lady of Stafford looked more beautiful than in her white robes, her hair falling loose about her shoulders, and her features hidden by the long silken veil upon which she had labored for so many happy hours. At the church door the bridal party were met by the bishop, and there the beautiful betrothal service took place, the King himself giving the bride away. Then they advanced to the altar and the bishop solemnly declared them man and wife.

After the ceremony Henry led the Lady March to the great marriage feast, prepared with a truly royal splendor, and when all were in their places he raised his goblet and cried out,—"Drink, lords and ladies, to our cousin and dear friend, the Earl of March, and to his beautiful and noble bride!" And amid cheers which made the stately palace tremble, the guests placed the red wine to their lips and drank the toast.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Nay, but the man that was his bedfellow,
Whom he hath dull'd and cloy'd with gracious favors—
That he should, for a foreign purse, so sell
His sovereign's life to death and treachery!"

HENRY V.

BARON SCROPE of Masham had been present at both the coronation and the wedding, and Henry had treated him with such kindness that the court supposed him still a dearly beloved friend of the young monarch. Scrope himself was entirely puzzled by his situation. It did not seem possible that Henry was still ignorant of his treachery in the council, yet the baron occupied as honored a place as if he had been absolutely true. His vanity prevented his realizing that in the momentous events following Bolingbroke's death the nobles had other matters to discuss which far exceeded in importance the ambiguous conduct of the former treasurer. On the other hand, his suspicious nature could not comprehend that spirit of absolute trust which was so beautiful a part of the King's character. That Henry had never once doubted him seemed beyond belief; and the baron, searching for an explanation, decided that a deep motive must underlie the King's conduct—that he was to be treated with great kindness and raised to mighty heights, only to fall the farther in the end.

Cruel and unscrupulous himself, Scrope vowed to frustrate the expected revenge of his royal master. He made his plans deliberately, and then bent all his energy toward their execution. It must be his ruin or the King's; and he would fight to the very death!

When the young King had appeared for the first time before the court, and had appointed the Earl of Arundel his treasurer, the baron believed that all had been discovered and that he would receive his richly deserved punishment. Henry's reference to France he had instantly construed as a decree of banishment, and had the King been of a suspicious nature, or the hour less filled with engrossing incidents, Scrope's exclamation,—"Am I exiled for life?" would have betrayed him. But Henry, recalling the occurrence, thought that the baron, after being deprived of his high place in council, might easily misunderstand his own hasty words, and other and more important matters quickly drove this memory from the royal mind.

Knowing well what treatment he deserved, no amount of kindness upon the King's part could convince Scrope that he was safe from Henry's vengeance; and while the King's gracious words, making him the chief ambassador upon a most important foreign mission, still rang in his ears, the baron's brain was busied with the thought of how he could yet ruin the man he had grown to hate.

The announcement that Mortimer would be set at liberty had, in a flash, shown him the one

spot where he could strike at the King; but even as this idea came to him, a sudden memory of the scene in the young earl's apartment, when he had borne Arundel's letters to the Prince, warned him that he must proceed with caution. Apparently the two young men had been on terms of friendship;—in that case Mortimer, upon being set at liberty and restored to his estates, would not be prepared immediately to conspire against the King. In a few months, however, he would doubtless be ready to demand the throne.

But Henry's words indicated that the French mission must be executed with all despatch, and Scrope determined to choose such men for his companions as would best assist him to accomplish his own purposes. What names should he propose upon the morrow?

Going to his chamber, he spent many hours in thought, reviewing in his mind the various noblemen of the court. Among the knights, no one semed more suitable than Sir Thomas Grey of Northumberland. He was proud, hot-spirited, an excellent swordsman, and a devoted follower of the disgraced House of Percy, Earls of Northumberland. His influence would win to the cause he espoused the chief men of the northern part of England, and possibly, through his friendship with the banished son of Hotspur, Scotland itself might give them aid.

As Scrope considered these possibilities, a contented smile played about his lips. Ay, Grey should accompany him! Who else?

A sudden daring idea came to the baron. Why not choose a man of even higher rank than himself? Henry had not limited his choice. Suppose—and Scrope's cheek grew hot with excitement—suppose he suggested one of the blood royal! But no—he dared not trust a brother of the King—if one of the young princes rebelled 'twould be for his own sake, and not to elevate the House of Mortimer. But there was the Duke of York, descended from a younger brother of John of Gaunt—would he join their conspiracy? Alas! he was a strong man, and full of gratitude toward the young King who had been most kind to him—was there a man in England toward whom he had not shown kindness? thought the baron angrily. No, Edmund of York would not rebel, even to win the throne for himself! There was no one, then?—stay! Richard of Conisborough, the very man! A younger brother of York, he was weak and jealous, ever ready to turn against even his dearest friends. And he had married Anne Mortimer, the earl's sister! But she had lately died, and he had just wedded Maud, Lord Clifford's daughter. Would he fight for the brother of his former wife? A sudden evil gleam shone in the baron's eyes. Had not rumor said that Richard had killed his wife by coldness and faithlessness? And was it not now

reported that he was filled with remorse, and almost hated the new lady of Conisborough? Ah, he would stir that remorse to fiery heat! In memory of the wronged Lady Anne, my lord should use his sword to help their cause!

The next morning Scrope went to the King and proposed these two names. Henry was delighted. "Excellent, my lord. I had desired to honor my cousin Richard. I will create him Earl of Cambridge before ye do depart. Is not the knight a friend of the House of Percy?"

"Ay, my liege; if thou canst win his support by thy favor it will be well."

The King smiled thoughtfully. "Ay, baron, that is our desire. Henry Percy shall be recalled from banishment and his title and estates restored to him; and we must so honor his powerful friends and neighbors that every one shall be loyal to his King."

Scrope was considerably alarmed by these good intentions, but he comforted himself with the thought that he would have several months in which to poison the minds of his companions during their sojourn in a foreign land, and he resolved to strike so quickly upon their return to court that no new kindness of the monarch could make them hesitate to act against him.

Of what happened during the long period of time which the ambassadors spent in France the world knows little. Doubtless they executed their mission

acceptably, since Henry kept them there. However, they did not avert a war; for in July, 1415, the English forces, led by the greatest nobles of the land, assembled at Southampton to embark for France. Scrope had been more successful in his plans than he had dared to hope. Both Cambridge and Grey were determined to put Mortimer upon the throne; and the baron had contrived to make them believe that the conspiracy was theirs, and that he himself had only, after great reluctance, consented to join them. He was still daring to hope that should they fail he could escape punishment. Traitor that he was, Scrope skilfully obtained assistance from the French. It was his quiet influence which secured from certain officials the offers of large sums of money as a reward for delivering the English King into their hands. Cambridge and Grey entered into the plan with great enthusiasm—the baron did not actually pledge his word. Perhaps he believed that the Frenchmen would not kill the young monarch, but simply hold him in an honorable captivity—a situation which would be too dangerous—for Henry must die before Mortimer could rule. But meantime the hope of the foreign gold would prevent Cambridge and Grey from abandoning the plot.

In another direction Scrope had failed entirely. Through his allies—and they supposed the idea to be their own—he had endeavored to have Percy bring over a Scottish army,—"To revenge upon the King the death of your father and your own dis-

grace." But the Earl of Northumberland returned a spirited answer.—The King had restored him in blood and granted him his titles and estates, and was even then arranging with the Scottish Government that he should be exchanged for that royal prince, Murdoch Stuart, son of the Duke of Albany. Therefore he would be loyal to the King and serve him faithfully!

Percy had not been informed of the conspiracy, which was fortunate for Scrope, since upon the young Earl's final arrival in England he at once assembled all the liegemen of his house, and, marching with them to Southampton, threw himself at Henry's feet and declared that he and his followers were prepared to fight to the death for the King, either against the French, "or any persons whatsoever who are your Highness's enemies."

Henry received him most graciously, and throughout his campaigns Percy was one of his ablest generals.

The English army was to sail upon the 22d of July. The 21st arrived, and at last the conspirators could no longer delay making their plans known to the Earl of March, whom they had decided to carry hastily to the frontier of Wales, and there to proclaim him King in the hope that the discontented Welsh would rally to his support.

The baron would not risk being himself present at the interview with March, but he warned Cambridge again and again to proceed with great cau-

tion and not to betray their plans until he was assured that the young earl would give them his hearty support. Scrope counted upon Mortimer's youth, inexperience, and the natural desire of every man for power, especially when it is his by right of birth, as affording sufficient reason for the earl's rebellion. He failed to comprehend the power of those qualities of gratitude and love of which his own nature was incapable, yet he was, nevertheless, uneasy over the coming interview. His cowardly desire to save himself at any risk was his own ruin. Had he been present, his keen knowledge of human nature would have warned him that Mortimer's calm attentiveness and quiet questions were no promise of support. And yet Edmund played his part so well that he might even have won in a contest of skill with the baron. Amazed and filled with fury at the proposition, the young earl, with wonderful self-control, forced himself to listen quietly at first, with faint protests against any thought of disloyalty, then to betray an increasing excitement and interest as the weak and impulsive Cambridge unfolded the plot before him; to question closely without seeming to do so; and finally to exclaim,—"I must have time, my lord, to consider so tremendous a proposal as thou hast made; to-morrow,—to-night, thou shalt have my answer. At what hour can I meet you all?"

The delighted Cambridge named an hour and place, and, going to Scrope, told him enthusiastically

that March was transported by the plan and would meet them that night to make the final arrangements. The baron received his statement doubtfully; but as, in answer to his questions, Cambridge described the young earl's manner, even he appeared to be satisfied.

Mortimer, having left Cambridge's apartments, went to his own chamber and briefly told his wife what had occurred. Anne received the information with breathless wonder. "They would make thee King?" she cried, trembling. "Edmund, hast thou given thy consent?" "I have as yet made no response," he answered; "but to-night they have appointed a meeting at which I have promised to give my decision." "And then?" she asked, clinging to his arm and searching his face eagerly. He smiled into her anxious eyes, then bent and kissed her tenderly, as he answered, "I shall pray the King to allow me to guide his soldiers to the meeting place and to arrest them for high treason." "Thank God!" she cried. "Ah, my Edmund, how could I have doubted thee even for a moment." "Thou dost not desire to be Queen, my sweet?" "Never through treason," answered the Lady Anne.

The King was in his chamber; several of his generals had just left him, and he was alone. Mortimer was admitted, and the door was closed.

* * * * * * *

Two hours later, Westmoreland, Thomas Beau-

fort, and the Earl of Nottingham were summoned to the royal presence. They found Henry alone, his face white and very stern. "My lords," he said, keeping his voice steady only by a great effort, "we learn that there are traitors here among us. Our late ambassadors to France have conspired against our person and have agreed to sell us to our enemies and place the Earl of March upon the throne. Mortimer has this day learned of the plot and has informed us of it. Go, lords, and arrest these men and bring them immediately to trial. Our departure for France must be delayed until this matter is determined."

The astonished noblemen gazed, speechless, at the King. Henry stood for a moment, grave and silent, then suddenly he turned and sank upon a bench, covering his face with his hands. "My God," he cried in agony, "whom can I trust? Scrope was my dear friend, the companion of my youth, the man to whom I have shown every honor; upon whose loyalty I would have staked my very soul. Can it be possible that *he* is false?"

"What proof is there, my liege? March's unsupported word?" asked Westmoreland.

"Wouldst have me doubt this other friend, Neville?" demanded the King sternly. "Nay, cousin, he could have had no reason to torture me by such a wretched tale. Cambridge betrayed to him the entire plan, and Scrope was hand and glove with his companions. Yet think not that I do condemn

them without a hearing. If they shall utterly deny the charges, and at their trial give proof of innocence, we will restore them to our confidence."

Thus spoke the King, but there was no hope upon his gloomy face.

The nobles departed to do their monarch's bidding, and the news of the arrests startled the entire court. Scrope and Grey at first denied their guilt entirely; but the weak Earl of Cambridge, overcome with fear, made a complete confession. In his fury at being betrayed, he also charged Mortimer with having taken an active part in the conspiracy; but Edmund's account was too circumstantial to allow the slightest doubt of him to enter the King's mind. A court was at once summoned to try the prisoners, and the evidence against Cambridge and Grey caused them to be immediately declared guilty of high treason. Scrope had so cunningly concealed his own share in the plot that he was convicted simply for privity in the conspiracy. He admitted a "knowledge of the general scheme," but denied that he had known of any attempt against Henry's person, and demanded a trial by his peers.

A second court, composed of the highest nobles, and presided over by the Duke of Clarence, was summoned, and Cambridge and Scrope appeared before it. The proofs of guilt were even stronger than before, and on the 5th of August the two traitors were condemned to death. The baron saw at last that there was no hope for him, but even in his

final hour he perceived how he could still cruelly hurt the King he could not ruin. He asked permission, for the sake of former days, to speak with him alone. The nobles, fearing they knew not what, tried to prevent it, but Henry consented and bade them all withdraw to the farther end of the hall. And then Scrope, looking into Henry's eyes boldly, with his hatred no longer concealed, told the simple story of his long endeavor to ruin the King. "Thou hast won," the baron cried with a bitter laugh, "it is but right that thou shouldst know thy triumph."

And Henry stood and listened to the shameless words, his face ashen, his eyes appealing, as Scrope tore the mask from his every deed and showed the King how utterly blinded he had been. "Hold!" Henry cried at last. "Thou art surely mad! Art thou incapable of shame that thou canst tell me this? Or dost thou at the last repent thee of thy sins?"

"Repent!" and Scrope gave a sharp, scornful laugh. "Repent? Never! I go to my death, O King, sorrowful that I can do thee no further injury. Thou hast conquered, Henry, for I die; yet, while thou livest, *thou canst never wholly trust another man!*" And with a smile of triumphant hatred upon his face the baron turned, rejoined his waiting guard, and was led forth to his death.

The King had commanded that the usual processes of torture, decreed by the court's sentence, should be omitted, and the execution of the three conspirators was speedily accomplished. For the

Earl of Cambridge and Grey of Northumberland the punishment was merited, but sufficient. Henry alone knew that in the case of Baron Scrope of Masham it was far more lenient than his crimes deserved.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"O love, love, love!
Love is like a dizziness;
It winna' let a poor body
Gang about his business."

HOGG.

IN the year fourteen hundred and nineteen, and the month of May, a meeting was arranged between Queen Isabella and the Duke of Burgundy on the one hand, and the victorious King of England upon the other.

The past few years had been busy ones for Henry of Monmouth. The gradual and brilliant conquest of France had displayed the wonderful qualities of the conqueror. Brave and fearless, the leader in every battle, and, during the intervals of peace, the wise and clement ruler, Henry had bound his own people to him by such strong ties of love and admiration that never once during his glorious reign did the formerly restless and rebellious Parliament fail to give him the most loyal support, and to willingly provide him with the necessary funds with which to carry on his vast enterprises.

England had applauded the conquest of Harfleur; it had gone almost wild after the victory of Agincourt, and now at last, weary by the long war, John, Duke of Burgundy, had joined with the French

Queen in offering most advantageous terms of peace to Henry. One of the victor's chief demands was the hand of Catherine of Valois in marriage, and upon the morrow the Princess was to appear at the conference in person. The reports of her grace, her modesty, and her great beauty had made the English lords both curious and eager, and she was the one topic under discussion among them, the question of her appearance seeming of more importance than the King's acquisition of the throne of France!

Upon this beautiful May evening the Earl of March left his tent, and passing through the camp, wandered down to the bank of the River Seine, which stretched before him, glistening like silver in the moonlight. A passionate lover still, Mortimer's chief interest in the momentous meeting lay in his hope that it would result in a peace which would make it possible for him to be once more with Anne; and as he stood gazing into the cool depths of the water, his thoughts were not concerned with the Princess, but with his beloved bride. The memories of the past years came crowding upon him, with their constant, sweet joys, and his heart throbbed with longing as the tender, wistful face of his wife rose before him and he felt again in imagination the touch of her lips upon his own.

An approaching footstep roused him from his revery, and turning sharply, his sword half drawn, he cried out, "Who goes there?"

"Is it thou, Edmund?" asked a clear, sweet voice.

The earl sprang forward. "Sire! Your Highness is not alone?"

The King advanced wrapped in a long riding-cloak, which concealed both face and figure so that one might have supposed him a common soldier. "I am alone," he answered, "I stole secretly from out my tent that I might pass an hour in solitude."

Mortimer hesitated and glanced at his friend doubtfully. "Shall I withdraw, sire?" he asked. "Wilt thou be in safety?"

Henry smiled. "I have my good sword, but go not, Edmund, for to thee, dear friend, I can freely speak my thoughts." He extended his hand and drew the earl down beside him upon the bank. For a space they sat in silence, gazing into the cool depths of the river. Then, sighing, Henry asked in low tones, "Hast thou ever regretted, Edmund, thy marriage with Lady Anne?"

"Regretted it!" cried Mortimer earnestly. "My liege, every day and hour have been crowded with happiness. My love grows deeper with each passing moon, and Anne doth fill my life with sweetest joy. My lord, I can never repay thy blessed kindness in giving me my bride."

The King seemed scarcely to hear this eager speech, but pursuing his own line of thought, said slowly,—"Didst thou truly love her before thou hadst spoken with her?"

"Ay, my love sprang up within my heart when first mine eyes beheld her," answered Mortimer,

puzzled by the question—surely the King had believed in his passion before he wooed the lady.

A long silence followed. Then Henry, as if speaking to himself, said in a low, sad tone, "I believe that could I wed her whose face I love, I, even I, the King, might know the meaning of earthly happiness."

The earl gave a start and tried to see his friend's averted face. "I do not understand," he muttered fearfully. Henry sighed again, then answered gently, "Hast thou forgot the night that I came to thy chamber and showed to thee my precious miniature?"

Mortimer leaned forward and touched the King's arm. "Canst thou mean, my liege, that thou hast loved throughout these busy years a woman whom thou hast never even seen? Good God! Why hast thou not sought her out and made her thy true wife?"

"And Queen of England?" asked Henry bitterly. "Wouldst thou have thy King marry beneath his rank? She may not even be of noble birth, and I must wed with *royal* blood alone!" He laughed shortly, then reached out and seized the earl's hand as if longing for a touch of sympathy. "Listen," he said, in low and trembling tones. "That night when I did tell thee of my love methought it but the fancy of a moment which I could toss aside at pleasure. I then expected to wed the daughter of Burgundy,

and when the alliance was broken, I allowed myself to gaze often upon that charming, pictured face. I placed the maiden foremost in my heart and let my love for her uphold my courage, strengthen me amidst my cruel trials, and be the inspiration of my life. And now," he added, rising to his feet and beginning to pace the ground with restless, impatient steps, "now I find 'tis not an idle fancy, but a living, breathing woman whom I love! I curse the day I fought to win the Princess—I hate to hear them praise her virtuous beauty! To-morrow must I meet my future bride—and I cannot force myself to destroy the miniature!"

The earl sat in silence, unable to find any words of comfort, while Henry paced back and forth in front of him, his hands clinched, his under lip caught between his teeth, and his head thrown back as if in defiance of his fate. Suddenly he stopped before his friend, and in low tones thrilling with something akin to horror, exclaimed,—"Edmund, what if she be among the Princess's ladies?"

The earl sprang to his feet. "Impossible!" he cried.

"Nay, most possible," answered Henry gravely. "I am convinced that I shall see the maiden upon the morrow!"

"It may be thou wilt not know her," faltered Mortimer.

"Dost think that I could fail to recognize the face I love?"

"Perchance she will disappoint thee, and—and destroy thy love," suggested the earl despairingly.

"Never!" replied the King in so confident a manner that one would have thought he expected to be happy with the maiden of his choice. "I shall find her all that I have dreamed—a tender, loving woman, beautiful and noble, worthy of the greatest prince in Christendom. And I can never tell her of my love!"

He sank upon the ground, and pulling up some long grasses, tore them in bits. "I envy the fate of that young monk!" he exclaimed.

Mortimer's face grew white. "Sire, thou—thou wilt do naught unworthy of thy place?" he pleaded brokenly.

Henry raised his head and sadly smiled. "Fear not, Edmund," he replied; "did I regard my duty to my people as of so little moment I would give up my throne and wed whom I desired. God gave me my life, and I must keep it until the end. But why did he give me this tormenting love?" he cried passionately. "Why must I be thus cursed?"

"My liege," said Mortimer gently, "no love is a curse. Thou canst make thine a noble blessing."

"Doth it indeed seem possible to thee, Edmund?" cried the King almost fiercely. "Tell me, I prithee, how thou wouldst proceed. When I do stand before the Princess Catherine, and greet her as the future Queen of England, when I do vow to take her as my wife, and pledge to her my honor and loyalty, can I

then see among her train the lady whom I love with all my heart, and yet declare my love shall be a blessing? By Heaven! thou art mad to call it so!"

Henry sprang to his feet and held out his hands appealingly. "Ah, Edmund, I would gladly die tonight could I but have one hour of happiness. Oh, my friend, my fate is very bitter!"

The earl went to him and gently placed an arm across his shoulders. "Dear my lord, be comforted," he said, in tones that trembled with deep sympathy. The young King stood a moment, struggling to preserve his self-control. It was years since any one—even the earl himself—had dared to show such tenderness for him, and the touch of Mortimer's arm almost unmanned him, but in an instant he was calm again. "Remain here, Edmund," he said steadily, "I will return erelong," and he turned hurriedly away and descended the slope to the water's edge.

Henry knew that not even his friend could help him in this last fight. For half an hour he paced the bank alone, battling with the desires of his heart, which he believed unholy. With hands clinched and a brow upon which the moisture stood in drops, he fought to tear his love from his pure heart, that he might bestow upon the Princess that entire loyalty which he felt was necessary to every holy marriage. The agony which this struggle cost him would have driven a weaker man to desperate deeds; but at length, with a prayer for strength upon his lips, Henry of Monmouth drew from his breast the

miniature, tore it into small pieces, and throwing them into the water, watched them slowly drift down the moonlit stream and vanish into the black depths. The young monarch knelt for a moment imploring help and comfort from that Power who alone could grant his plea, then rising, he ascended the sloping bank and called softly, "Mortimer!"

The earl, who had grown very anxious at his long absence, sprang forward with a cry of relief. He could not see in the dim light that Henry's face was calm and peaceful once more, but in his voice he heard the note of triumph and confidence. "Come with me, Edmund," said the King quietly, "I have often shared thy couch—to-night thou shalt share mine, for thou must be beside me on the morrow when I greet my bride, the Princess Catherine."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"And to his eye
There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him."

BYRON.

THE thirtieth of May dawned clear and beautiful. Most elaborate preparations had been made for the great meeting. The French were encamped at Pontoise, the English at Mantes, and between the villages Queen Isabella had caused to be erected two great tents; that of the French being of blue velvet richly embroidered with the nation's emblem, the fleur-de-lis, surmounted by the silver figure of a flying hart, with enamelled wings; while the English tent was even more magnificent, being made of alternate blue and green velvet with two antelopes worked upon it, one drawing in a mill, the other seated on high, with a branch of olives in his mouth; —the motto, "After busy labor comes victorious rest," explained the design; at the top of the tent rested a golden eagle, whose eyes were two diamonds.

Between these gorgeous tents was a magnificent centre pavilion, on either side of which were placed barriers, to be closely guarded, that none but the highest dignitaries might enter.

At three in the afternoon the two parties issued

from their tents and proceeded in state to the pavilion. The scene was a most brilliant one. The Queen, gorgeously robed, walked by the side of John of Burgundy, with the Princess Catherine upon her left. They were followed by an extensive train of lords and ladies splendidly arrayed.

King Henry, in royal robes and crowned, walked at the head of his great nobles with such proud dignity in his mien that he inspired awe in every breast. His face was calm, as befitted one who had conquered his own spirit, and his heart was quiet and content. The battle with his love had ended, and without dismay, but with the determination to do his duty fully, he moved steadily forward to greet his future bride. Entering the pavilion, the King first advanced to Isabelle, and saluted her by a profound obeisance. Then he turned toward the Princess. Catherine, in the very height of her youth and beauty, stood beside her mother; her slender, graceful figure arrayed in a rich gown, over which fell a long mantle of ermine, the front being a broad strip of ermine embroidered with magnificent jewels, while her head, held erect with charming dignity, was crowned by the arched coronet worn by the children of the King of France.

As the English nobles saw her beauty, murmurs of admiration and satisfaction rose among them; but Henry, looking full into her face, started violently and uttered a sharp cry. Was he mad? Had his eyes, longing for the sight of certain features,

played him false? He gazed, stupefied, upon that delicate, oval-shaped face, that fair complexion, that exquisitely cut mouth, those dark and lustrous eyes,—a thousand times more beautiful than even his imagination had painted her, and yet the living, breathing image of his thoughts!

Catherine's cheeks grew crimson under his fixed, abstracted gaze; the Queen watched him in evident amazement, and Burgundy made an impatient movement. The Duke of Clarence stepped forward and touched his brother upon the arm. Henry, recalled with a start to his surroundings, turned hastily to Isabelle, took her by the hand and led her to a throne covered with cloth of gold. He then took a seat opposite, listened to Burgundy's greetings, and responded very graciously. This duty over, however, he paid no further heed to the proceedings, and while Earl Warwick and other Englishmen addressed the Queen and replied to the compliments of the French nobility, King Henry, who had never been known to lose for an instant either his dignity or his self-control, sat perfectly motionless in his place, his eyes fixed with an eager, intense gaze upon the Princess Catherine, completely oblivious to what was happening around him.

When the conference was at last ended, he parted from her so reluctantly and with such a depth of emotion in his look and tone, that her heart throbbed wildly and she could scarcely meet his eyes.

There never lived a woman who did not desire to

be wooed, and Catherine of Valois, after a restless night, paced her apartment with impatient steps. "Is it not hard, Joan," she cried in French to her favorite lady, "that because I am a princess I must stand by in silence while my royal suitor asks the King, my father, for my hand? Oh, I would that I were a beggar maid and he a peasant, that he might woo me freely with sweet words! By Heaven, methinks he would be eloquent!"

The words had scarcely left her lips when one of her maidens entered in great excitement. "Madam," she stammered, "King Henry himself standeth below and craveth speech with your Grace."

Catherine seized her by the arm. "Hast lost thy wits, girl?" she cried. "What doth he here? Is he attended by his noble train? Cometh he not to see mine honored mother?"

"Nay, madam," answered the lady, "he rode hither with scarce a dozen men-at-arms, and dismounting at the door, entered the hall alone and asked for you."

The Princess sprang to her dressing-table. "Quick, Margery, fetch me my flowered satin trimmed with rubies, and thou, Joan, I prithee unbind my hair. Blanche, hie thee to the King with speed, and tell him that I will be with him anon."

In spite of her desire to appear as charming as possible, the Princess made a very hasty toilet, but to the impatient monarch it seemed an age ere she at last descended, accompanied by the ladies Joan and

Margery. He came forward to meet her, his eyes brilliant with joy. She faltered a little, and blushed most charmingly as she asked in her pretty, broken English, "Monseigneur, you come to spik to—ma mère. Ees it not so?"

"Upon mine honor, no!" cried the King. "I come to speak with *thee,* thou fairest of all maidens. Wilt thou give me leave to tell thee what is in my heart?"

"Il n'est pas le coûtume de France,—" began the Princess hesitatingly, but Henry cried out,—"What! Wilt thou submit thee to the decree of custom? Now, by my faith, I have no patience with it! Must I so curb my heart that when we meet in state my greeting shall be only with mine eyes? Nay, as I live, thou shalt know my love for thee by other method than thy mother's lips. Sweetheart, my heart has been within thy keeping for many years."

Catherine glanced at him, half shyly, half mischievously, "Ees yesterday many years?" she demanded.

"Nay, I speak truth," he answered earnestly. "I loved thee long, long ere I did see thee. The thought of thee has been my strength and my encouragement throughout the busy years which I have lived, and yet I did not know thou wert the princess! Wouldst thou hear the story of my love?"

Catherine hesitated, looked into his eager face, and yielded to her curiosity. "I vill listen," she said, and dropped her eyes before the passion which shot out of his. He took her hand, and in the hap-

piness of that moment forgot even the two ladies who stood behind her, watching his handsome face with eager eyes. "Fair Catherine," said Henry gently, "when thou wert but a child, a Frenchman more noble in birth than strong in character, loved thee and left his monastery to see thy beauteous face. He painted a miniature of thee, and, dying at Calais, gave it unto me. 'Twas while I was but Prince of Wales, my sweet, yet I did love thee then as I love thee now! What sayest thou to my constancy?"

The Princess's cheeks were rose-color. She understood the meaning of this simple story, and her heart bounded at the thought of such great love. "I would see zat picture," she said shyly.

Henry shook his head sadly. "The night before I saw thee, Catherine, I did destroy it that I might offer to my future bride my undivided heart. Ah, if thou didst but know the cruel battle I fought to conquer my love for thee! And now, thou fairest, I can love thee without thought of wrong, for thou shalt be the bride of Harry of England."

She met his eyes for a brief moment. "If it sall please le roi mon père," she answered shyly.

"Nay, doubt not but it will please him well," answered the King confidently; "for I will make thee Queen over the united kingdoms of England and of France! But, sweetheart, I desire somewhat more than a fair queen," he continued earnestly. "I love thee, Catherine, with all my heart. What sayest

thou? Canst thou bestow upon me the love a tender wife owes to her husband?"

"I do not know," she murmured.

"Nay, fairest, let me look into thine eyes. Oh! they are glorious; and those enchanting lips tempt me to madness! How I have hungered for this blessed day. Canst thou not give me one precious word to treasure? Wilt thou not love me, Catherine?"

She trembled a little, then looked again at him, noted his grace, his beauty, the passionate fire of love within his eyes; and as she looked there came to his lips that radiant smile which no one could resist, and the Princess, her heart bounding with happiness, smiled back at him and held out her little hand.

With a cry, the King sprang forward. "Dost thou love me?" he demanded, trembling in his eagerness. An instant she hesitated, then raised her head and allowed her eyes to answer. He searched them with an intense gaze, and with his great joy throbbing in his voice, pleaded, "Tell it me, my sweet. Say to me, Harry, I love thee." Her bosom heaved, her eyes were downcast, but his voice rang in her ears, and at length she gathered courage and bravely said, "Mon roi, I—love—" she could go no farther, for the King, with a deep and tender joy, took her in his arms and placed upon her lips the kiss which sealed the union of their lives.

And Henry of Monmouth, looking into Cath-

erine's eyes, knew that God had granted to him above all men the perfect love which makes this earth a heaven.

THE END.